

AUGUST 9, 2004

IN THESE TIMES

8 WAYS TO BUILD A BETTER BODY POLITIC



Contents

Volume 28 • Numbers 18 & 19

8 Ways to Build a Better Body Politic

Make Judicious Appointments

By Hans Johnson

18 The Democrats must make Bush's far-right judicial nominees a campaign issue.

Exercise Fiscal Responsibility

By Dean Baker and Heather Boushey

20 Our budget priorities have led us to the edge of a precipice.

Forge a Coalition with Labor

By David Moberg

22 Those seeing no difference between Bush and Kerry should (card) check their head.

Be a Good Steward

By Adam Werbach

24 Kerry should use executive orders for the benefit of the environment.

Win Over Women

By Susan J. Douglas

26 Women are angry, and they're not going to take it anymore.

Prioritize Civil Rights

By Salim Muwakkil

28 Get it together: The hip-hop generation is mobilizing.

Educate All Children

By Barbara Miner

30 Adequate and equitable funding is required for an honest education policy.

Cure a Sick Healthcare System

By Steffie Woolhandler and David Himmelstein

32 National health insurance can heal us—for what we're now spending.



6 Counting the Costs

By Phyllis Bennis and Laura Dolan

With no end in sight, the price of the Iraq war continues to skyrocket.

8 Two Steps Forward

By Doug Cassel

The recent Supreme Court decisions are a start toward returning to the rule of law, but not the end.

10 Too Little, Too Late

By Eric Reeves

Colin Powell's visit to the Sudan only highlights the tragic consequences of the United States' inaction.

11 In Person

By David Moberg

Howard Dean's permanent campaign.

12 House Call

By Rep. José E. Serrano (D-N.Y.)

Looking at what might have been.

13 Capitol Report

By Craig Aaron

Monkey sees, monkey does: cash and Kerry.

14 Truth & Consequences

By David Sirota

Some Republicans can no longer stand themselves.

15 Viewpoint

By David Cobb

Concerned about Kerry? Nauseated by Nader? Go Green!

16 The First Stone

By Joel Bleifuss

Fahrenheit 9/11 and Bush's Christmas wish for July.



34 • There's No Place Like Home

By David Moberg

BOOKS Tom Frank asks *What's the Matter with Kansas?*

36 • When Yes Means No

By Michael Atkinson

FILM *The Yes Men* affirms resistance.

37 • Tuneful Humanism

By Kevin Canfield

MUSIC A.C. Newman and Br. Danielson remind us why rock rules.

40 • Revenge of the Combat Cartoonist

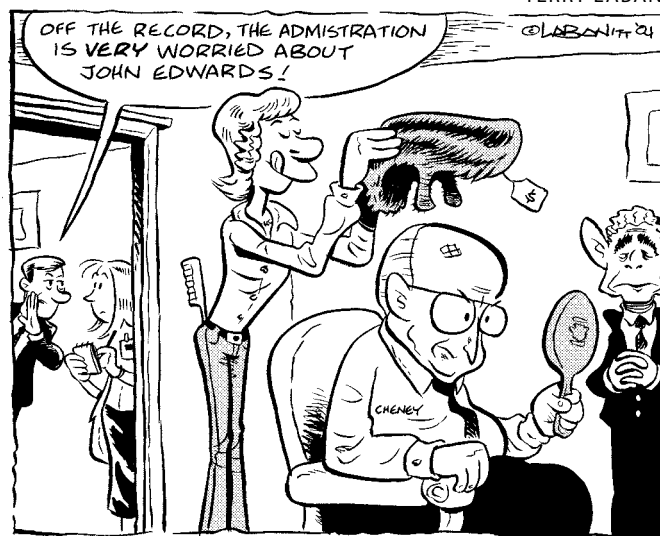
By Mark Engler

Take a tour through capitalism with El Fisgón.

Cover by Bruce Zick

“The truth is still the truth,
and a lie is still a lie,
and the rule of law should
apply to everyone, no matter what
excuses are made by the
president’s defenders.”

REP. JAMES SENSENBRENNER (R-WISC.)
FEBRUARY 9, 1999



Editorial

Grasping at Straw Men

By Cynthia Moothart

Moments after John Edwards was named Democratic vice presidential candidate, the Republican National Committee Web site

released 28 pages of “answers” to its own question: “WHO IS JOHN EDWARDS?”

“Edwards Lacks Accomplishments And Demonstrated Leadership Needed To Be President,” the RNC warned. They blasted the senator from North Carolina for being “Dis-ingenuous,” lodging at “Swank Hotels” and cozing up to, you guessed it, special interests. Then they let loose this bombshell: “Edwards Doesn’t Follow Weekly NASCAR Races”!

Equal only to its scandalous idiocy and predictable hypocrisy was the breakneck efficiency with which this “IN DEPTH” attack was proffered to media outlets nationwide—making it the second Shock and Awe campaign of this corrupt administration.

Whoa, what’s the hurry there, boys? Edwards had been on the ticket less than five minutes.

Polls consistently show that President Bush is losing stock with ever more Americans on a growing list of issues. Take the war on terror, the linchpin of his reelection bid. A *Washington Post*/ABC News poll from late June showed that 52 percent of Americans do not believe the war with Iraq was worth fighting, the first time a majority expressed doubts about the president’s foreign policy agenda. The Gallup Organization found that number to be even higher, at 55 percent.

This decline corresponds with other data from the same period. A poll conducted for National Public Radio indicated that 54 percent of Americans believe the country is on the wrong track, nearly matching the 58 percent who told Gallup they disapprove of Bush’s handling of the economy. The bipartisan Battleground Poll reported that 51 percent of likely voters nationwide said it is time to give someone else a chance to be president, up 2 percentage points from the month before. And it’s a well-worn fact that John Kerry tops Bush on big domestic issues like education, healthcare, Social Security and federal spending.

Lacking credibility on any issue, what do Republicans have left? More lies.

Words such as “specious,” “disingenuous,” “false,” “bogus,” “misleading” and “unfair” have been used by impartial outsiders to describe the GOP’s first round of attack ads. Trouble is, these specious, disingenuous, false, bogus, misleading and unfair ads worked magic.

After winning the Democratic primaries in early March, voters viewed Kerry favorably by a 2-to-1 margin. Following the Bush-Cheney smear campaign, the Pew Research Center found in mid-June that only half viewed Kerry favorably and four in 10 viewed him unfavorably. When asked to evaluate the can-

didates as people, the Battleground Poll also found a near-consistent split favoring Bush:

- “Says what he believes”: 57 percent Bush, 34 percent Kerry.
- “Steady, consistent leader”: 54 percent, 37 percent.
- “Represents my values”: 48 percent, 44 percent.
- “Is honest and trustworthy”: 45 percent, 42 percent.

Kerry’s one win in the poll came when voters were asked which candidate “cares about people like me,” topping Bush 46 percent to 41 percent.

With their crusade against Kerry complete, Republicans stopped running ads for several days in June.

But the timing and volume of their July 6 attack indicates that White House strategists know they won’t have it so easy with the personable Edwards, renowned for his ability to connect with voters.

So the GOP came out hard and fast and told a few more fibs. And offered such revelations as “EDWARDS IS PHONY AND DISINGENUOUS.” After all, this so-called Southerner “Hasn’t Hunted Or Fished ‘In Years,” “Can’t Even Remember Make Or Model Of His Own Truck” and “Has Never Done Any Serious Farming” —certainly all qualities “Needed To Be President,” as gop.com maintains.

Wait a minute. Isn’t Edwards second on the ticket? Oh, why let a few facts get in the way. ■

Autism Link is Dubious

As a public health nurse devoted to making sure our children are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases, I've grown weary of ill-documented, one-sided articles on the "link" between thimerosal and autism ("Hawkeyes Eye Mercury," July 5). And then I saw such an article in *In These Times*. I am no fan of for-profit medicine, pharmaceutical companies, or ingesting mercury, but neither am I a fan of emotionally charged health claims without scientific rationale. Study after study of thimerosal in vaccines have shown there to be no link. Recent research has pointed

instead to abnormalities of the central nervous system that occur before birth.

I understand how parents of children with autism could make the connection. Autism becomes evident about the same time children finish a fairly rigorous series of immunizations. But concurrent timing does not equal causality.

Soon the truth will be evident. Today, the routine childhood vaccines either contain no thimerosal or only trace amounts. If thimerosal is truly a major cause of autism, we very soon should be seeing a dramatic decrease in rates of the disorder. When that doesn't happen, we can put more

energy into finding the true causes of autism and working more productively to prevent this disabling disorder.

Cheryl Robinson, RN, MS
Madison, Wis.

GMO Victory Shared

As an activist on the frontlines fighting GMOs in the state of Vermont, I'd like to thank Melissa Pavolka for "Vermont Progressives Counter GMOs" (June 21). It was a long and hard-fought battle to get our issue on this year's legislative agenda, and it was heartwarming to see our efforts mentioned in *In These Times*.

However, the GMO Seeds Labeling Bill was not just a victory for the Vermont Progressive Party. It was a culmination of a three-year grassroots campaign involving hundreds of people across the state. Seventy-nine towns in Vermont (and a total of 92 across New England) have passed resolutions against genetically engineered food and crops. Organizations like the Institute for Social Ecology, GE-Free Vermont, Rural Vermont, Upper Valley GEAG of White River Junction and the Genetic Engineering Group of Brattleboro were all at the forefront working tirelessly, day after day, hour after hour, combating the Goliaths of industrialized agriculture.

On a cold wintry day in March, 200-plus Vermonters

rallied at the State House and shut down a hearing in which Monsanto was testifying. As a result, the House Agriculture Committee, the statewide media and biotech industry heard us, loud and clear.

As a participant I can truly say it served as the defining moment for us all. Not only did Gov. Jim Douglass sign the Seeds bill into law, the GMO Liability & Moratorium bills are on the horizon for next year.

Christian Avard
Brattleboro, Vt.

Johnson Given Short Shrift

As a charter subscriber to *In These Times*, I regret to tell you that Ian Williams' review of Chalmers Johnson's *The Sorrows of Empire* was perhaps the worst review I've read in *In These Times* ("The Sorrows of Dogma," May 31). It is the sort of thing one might expect in *The New Republic*. Thanks to your Buffalo, New York reader for calling Williams on his remark about the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, which he at least retracts ("Letters," July 5). The problem does not end there because I think his misreading of Johnson reflects a larger poverty of historical knowledge and perspective.

To dismiss, as Williams does, Johnson's work as a dogmatic "far left" theory of "a coherent imperialist plot" is a great disservice to *In These Times* readers. On page 167 of *The Sorrows of Empire*, Johnson writes: "As I have said, no single purpose can possibly explain the more than 725 American military bases spread around the world." I will not belabor his points in this chapter or his overall

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DISCUSSION

A reader recounts his own experiences in a debate about military recruiting tactics depicted in Fahrenheit 9/11:

In 1981, a friend of mine convinced me to visit an Air National Guard base to check out possibly enlisting....I enlisted and the next month, I had the permission slip from the folks to visit the Air Force Base in Biloxi.

As soon as the plane took off, the Everclear punch began to flow, as well as the beer. Recruiters, full-time Guard people and everybody, including the pilots, were drinking.

As soon as we landed, we dropped our stuff off at the Guard base where we bunked and then picked up rental cars and hit the dance clubs.

The next day was spent getting drunk on the beach, followed by more dance clubs later that night. Did we ever see the Air Force base? Of course not.

Hungover, sunburned and happy, we returned and told all our high school friends how great the Air National Guard was, with the mid-March sunburn to prove it, and about 10 of them enlisted.

Join the debate at "Framing Michael Moore" online.



analysis that is fact-based and detail-oriented, but he is clear that our problems with militarism and imperialism did not start with Bush Junior. Recent work on Central Asia and the U.S. role in that region cohere with what Johnson is detailing in his study. Furthermore, he is on target in raising questions about U.S. construction of a naval base off the coast of Nigeria. To accuse Johnson of "pandering to infantile left dogmas" suggest American "mainstream" blindfolds that Williams apparently shares.

Williams has a right to publish his views wherever he can, but I see no reason why *In These Times* should be printing distorted views one would expect to find in a corporate media organ invested in maintaining public belief in a democratic republic that does not have major problems with militarism and imperialism. Those of us reading *In These Times* in the '80s had a valuable antidote to the dismaying Orwellian revisions of the Reagan era that we've seen reappear the past few weeks. Williams' memory lapse concerning Nicaragua's history is, I'm afraid, symptomatic of a more serious problem.

Herbert Reid
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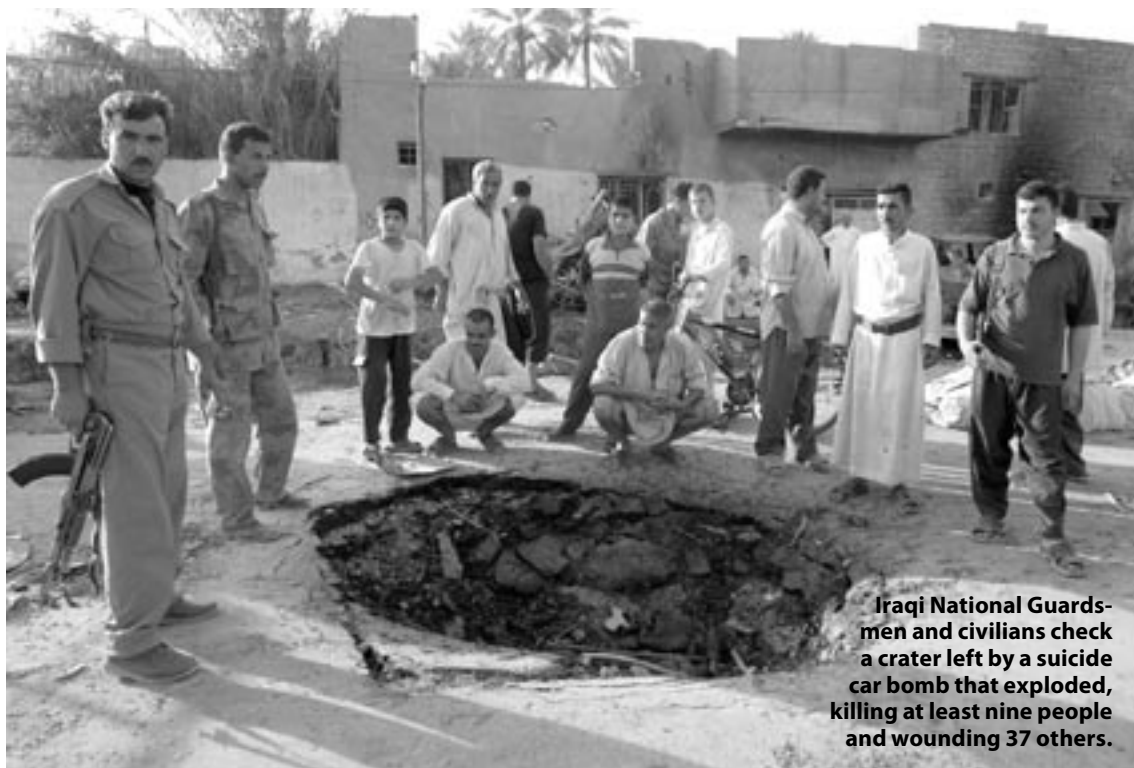
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Iraqi National Guardsmen and civilians check a crater left by a suicide car bomb that exploded, killing at least nine people and wounding 37 others.

AHMAD AL-RUBAYE / GETTY IMAGES

Counting the Costs

With no end in sight, the price for Iraq continues to skyrocket. By Phyllis Bennis and Karen Dolan

WHEN U.S. PROCONSUL PAUL BREMER LEFT Baghdad with what one of his own assistants called "his tail between his legs," he left behind a still-occupied country and a government completely reliant economically, militarily and politically on U.S. backing. The American taxpayers' tab for this quagmire is steadily mounting, as are the many other human, environmental and other costs of this war to Iraq, the United States and the world.

Bremer's fake handover of sovereignty really meant a transfer of control from Pentagon authority to a growing State Department-CIA collaboration to run the country after June 28. There's no end in sight to U.S. occupation.

We are paying far too high a price for failure in Iraq. And 15 months on, too few Americans have any real sense of the costs of this war. Many Americans and many more people around the world already know that the Bush administration's central claims

for launching this war were lies. Iraq didn't possess weapons of mass destruction, there were no mobile weapons labs and, despite a few insignificant contacts, Iraq lacked meaningful ties to al Qaeda. Still, a general lack of awareness regarding the price the world is paying for the war has squelched informed debate.

While most Americans are generally aware that the death toll for U.S. soldiers already has climbed past 870, most do not know that the number of Iraqi civilians killed is more than 10 times that number.

The enormous financial burden faced by so many U.S. military families gets scant attention, and few U.S. taxpayers realize how the billions spent on the war are expanding the already huge budget deficit.

There are statistics that clearly document the many costs to the United States, Iraq and the world for a war that has failed to make us safer or bring democracy to Iraq.

Here are some of the numbers from a comprehensive new study by the Institute for Policy Studies and

Foreign Policy In Focus titled *Paying the Price: The Mounting Costs of the Iraq War*:

- *U.S. military deaths between the start of war and July 6, 2004*: 870. Besides the more than 5,000 U.S. troops wounded directly in combat, an estimated 16,000 additional U.S. soldiers have been wounded or sickened in Iraq. We still don't know the numbers of those who have and will suffer psychological wounds that may never heal.
- *Iraqi civilians killed so far*: 11,430 to 13,096. The Pentagon refuses on principle to track the numbers of Iraqis killed; these figures are the high and low estimates of the Iraq Body Count team of British academics, who monitor the widest array of international media reports to verify their figures.
- *Detainee deaths during U.S. interrogation*: 34.
- *Local U.S. police departments missing officers due to Iraq deployments*: 44 percent.

The bill to U.S. taxpayers so far is \$126.1 billion, plus \$25 billion more authorized for the rest of 2004. Economist Doug Henwood estimates that three more years of occupying Iraq at \$50 billion a year will cost every U.S. household an average of \$3,415. That figure doesn't include the increase in the federal budget deficit and payments on the debt that will plague the next generation for decades to come.

If the U.S. hadn't gone to war, here are some of the things we could have paid for with that same \$151 billion, according to the National Priorities Project:

- Healthcare for 27 million uninsured Americans, or
- 3 million new teachers, or
- Classes for 20 million Head Start students.

If we do the same substitutions on an international scale, the calamity of this war is even more breathtaking. If, instead of going to war in Iraq, the U.S. had spent the same \$151 billion on international assistance, we could have paid for:

- Food for half the hungry people in the world for two years, and
- A comprehensive global AIDS program, and
- Clean water and sanitation for those lacking it in the entire developing world, and
- Childhood immunizations for every child in the developing world.

Such a spending policy would likely have laid the groundwork for making the whole

world a safer place. Instead, the United States, and the rest of the world, have become less, not more, secure. Once the State Department's "mistake" in calculating last year's Patterns of Global Terrorism report was outed, Secretary of State Colin Powell finally admitted that there were more "significant" incidents of international terrorism in 2003 than any other time in the history of these records.

Around the globe, anti-American sentiment has skyrocketed. Destabilization resulting from the invasion created a terrorist haven in Iraq that didn't previously exist. According to the influential International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, the primary impact of the Iraq war on al Qaeda has been "accelerated recruitment."

The U.S. military is so overstretched that there is talk of reviving the draft. Reserve troops and National Guard are being called up in enormous numbers (364,000 are now deployed around the globe, including about one-third of the Iraq occupation force) and spending long tours in Iraq that often last 20 months at a time. The U.S. Army plans to recall to active duty as many as 5,600 veterans who are not even members of the Reserve to help fill gaps in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to news reports.

The war has left Americans less secure at home, too. According to a recent survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, fewer than one quarter of surveyed cities have received any of the promised Homeland Security funds designed to assist state and local "first responders"—police, firefighters and emergency medical personnel, many of whom also are among the reservists now posted to Iraq. Military families at home face hardships associated with the loss of a breadwinner, including bankruptcy, hunger, unemployment and poor housing conditions. Not surprisingly, a U.S. Army poll showed more than half of U.S. soldiers in Iraq had low morale. And a reported 50 percent said they would not reenlist.

We should listen to the people of Iraq, in whose name the Bush administration launched this war. In May 2004 polls conducted by U.S. occupation authorities, 55 percent of Iraqis say they would feel safer if all U.S. occupation troops left their country. ■

PHYLLIS BENNIS is a Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), and is the lead author of *Paying the Price: The Mounting Costs of the Iraq War*, the first comprehensive accounting of the costs of the Iraq war to the United States, Iraq and the world. IPS Fellow **KAREN DOLAN** co-wrote the publication.

IN SHORT

Got Democracy?

As speakers at the Democratic National Convention deliver canned statements to shore up swing voters (and delegates pop the No-Doz), real policy debates will occur at two spirited counter-conventions outside the hall. From July 23 to July 25, thousands of progressives will meet on the campus of the University of Massachusetts for the Boston Social Forum, set to feature more than 400 workshops, seminars and films around the theme "Another Boston Is Possible."

"We have the opportunity here to build a major progressive movement within this region," says Jason Pramas, a BSF coordinator. "At the same time, we can take the best ideas and present them to the world through the lens of 15,000 media." The goal, he says, is not necessarily to influence the DNC but to showcase alternative solutions on issues from global trade to education.

By contrast, the Kucinich campaign is squarely targeting the Democrats with four days of public forums and street actions, July 26-29. Some events will focus on specific issues the campaign will call on the party to support, such as repeal of the USA PATRIOT Act and U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. Others will provide space for party activists to discuss future priorities. On the final night, the campaign will sponsor a Progressive Democratic Convention that will discuss specific pieces of legislation to fight for in Congress next year.

"This is not a 'shadow convention,'" says Tim Carpenter, Kucinich's convention coordinator. "We're coming as part of the Democratic Party." Whether it succeeds in getting its issues heard, the campaign will use the event to launch Progressive Democrats of America, a nonprofit grassroots organization to keep up the pressure after November. "We made a commitment to building the progressive wing of the party," says Carpenter. "We need to view Boston not as an end to itself, but as a beginning."

—Michael Blanding

Two Steps Forward

Supreme Court delivers partial victory for rule of law. *By Douglas Cassel*

THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISIONS IN three enemy combatant cases protect the rule of law from the worst excesses of the Bush administration's anti-terrorist policies but leave open important questions that demand vigilance and struggle.

The administration maintains that the president's constitutional mandate as a wartime commander-in-chief trumps all principles of law, articulated most nakedly in a now-disavowed 2002 Justice Department memorandum on detentions. Under this claim, Congress cannot prohibit torture because doing so would interfere with presidential discretion to win the war by whatever means deemed necessary.

In the litigation over enemy combatants, the administration similarly sought to oust the courts from overseeing individual rights. As Justice Sandra Day O'Connor

wrote for the majority in the case of U.S. citizen Yaser Hamdi—confined for more than two years as an “enemy combatant” in South Carolina—the “most extreme rendition” of the administration's arguments is that judicial deference to presidential power “ought to eliminate entirely any individual process, restricting the courts to investigating only whether legal authorization exists for the broader detention scheme.”

In other words, courts could review whether the president may detain enemy combatants but not whether a particular individual is an enemy combatant. Arguments like these, as columnist Molly Ivins warns, show us how fascism begins in a democracy.

Thankfully, the Supreme Court is more attuned than the president or his advisers to the essential need to safeguard liberty

through checks and balances and due process of law. By margins of 8-1 in cases of U.S. citizens and by 6-3 in the case of non-U.S. citizens imprisoned at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay, the Court ruled that there must be judicial review of whether detentions are lawful. The remaining, and troubling, questions involve how much judicial review there should be.

In the case of citizens, the Court ruled that due process requires that, at minimum, they be notified of the factual basis for the government's claims. They then must have a “meaningful opportunity” to provide evidence to rebut those claims before a “neutral decisionmaker.” Although the Court was ambiguous, a “meaningful” review almost certainly means that U.S. citizen-prisoners must have the right to counsel.

Beyond that, however, it will be up to lower courts to decide how extensive a hearing prisoners will get and before whom. For example, must a “neutral” decisionmaker be a federal judge or—as the government may propose—a panel of military officers? In either case, prisoners may still face an effective reversal of the

We the People

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by best-selling author and talk radio host **Thom Hartmann**

Illustrated by Neil Cohn

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Detainees stand near their cell blocks at Guantánamo.

burden of proof. Will the government have to prove grounds for detention, or will the prisoner instead have to prove that he is—as many claim—an innocent civilian caught up in the fog of war?

For non-U.S. citizens at Guantánamo, the doubts are even greater. The Court only rejected the administration's position (upheld by some lower courts) that no U.S. court can hear any claim by foreign citizens imprisoned outside formally "sovereign" U.S. territory. The Court ruled that Guantánamo is within its territorial jurisdiction and courts, so prisoners' claims to challenge the lawfulness of their detentions must now be heard.

But how? Will the lower courts limit themselves to ordering the military itself to conduct hearings, by means of the review panels of military officers recently announced by the Pentagon? And as currently established, the panels provide no right to counsel. The Court's opinion is ambiguous regarding the fate of prisoners held at secret detention centers besides Guantánamo that are not de facto U.S. territory. Will

they get access to American courts?

If due process is not to be sacrificed on the altar of the "war on terror," much work remains. The outcome of fundamental questions may turn on November's elections. While new justices appointed by Bush—should he win reelection—are unlikely to overturn the majorities in last month's rulings, they could decide that alleged enemy combatants have no right to counsel or that prisoners held by the United States in the Middle East have no right of access to our courts.

The Court's recent rulings steer the country away from the perilous path toward a national security state and add to the fragile momentum (under way as a reaction to prisoner torture at Abu Ghraib) in favor of reimposing the rule of law on an effectively lawless administration. ■

DOUG CASSEL is director of the Center for International Human Rights at Northwestern University School of Law and was a consultant to the lawyers for the prisoners in the Supreme Court cases.

APPALL-O-METER

3.8 Onward Christian Voters

Are Christian churches the fifth column of Bush-Cheney '04? Is the pope Republican?

The *Washington Post* has obtained an instruction sheet sent by Bush campaign operatives to godly volunteers across the country. The document directs volunteers to perform the following duties, among others:

"Send your Church Directory to your State Bush-Cheney '04 Headquarters or give [it] to a BC04 Field Rep.

"Receive a list from [your] County Chair of all non-registered church members and pro-Bush conservatives.

"Distribute voter guides in your church."

Is this legal? It's hard to say. It is clear, however, that Republicans regard church folks (the white ones, anyway) as their bread and butter. In June party leaders introduced the "Safe Harbor for Churches" provision to a House jobs bill, which would give clergy members wider latitude to engage in political activity without jeopardizing their churches' tax-exempt status.

2.8 Xtreme Xtians

For years now, evangelical churches have sown the seed of faith in the thin soil of youth culture. The results have been mixed. Souls are won for heaven, to be sure, but who really wants to listen to biblical rap?

The *New York Times* offers a glimpse of the recent but growing phenomenon of the Christian-themed rock extravaganza. At the "Creation East" festival in Mount Union, Penn., a reporter discovered

a booming trade in subcultural trinkets made for "younger evangelicals who express their faith through alternative music, tattoos and skateboards."

Amid racks of T-shirts bearing provocative messages ("Mosh for Jesus," "Hardcore Christian") was one bearing a curious *détournement* of a recent Mountain Dew ad campaign. In the place

of the Dew's well-known slogan, the T-shirt read, "Do the Jew!" Uh, presumably that's a tortured reference to Christ and not something more sinister.



2.4 Irrepressible Dick

Did the vice president tell a member of the U.S. Senate to go fuck himself or merely to fuck off? The nation's press corps cannot seem to decide. According to the Associated Press, Dick Cheney's outburst was either "F--- off!" or "F--- you!" The *Los Angeles Times* recorded it as "Go f--- yourself!" The *Miami Herald* sided with AP, while the *New York* tabloids held with the *LA Times* account. (This tally comes by way of *Editor and Publisher*.) The *New York Times* genteelly alluded to "an obscene phrase," while the *Boston Globe* more elegantly termed Cheney's ejaculation a "vulgar directive."

The *Washington Post*, meanwhile, was the only major newspaper to spell out the offending word—and took no small amount of heat for doing so. "The phones started ringing" with complaints from upright subscribers, disclosed that paper's editorial ombudsman in a meditation on naughty words.

Really, what's the BFD? And why does every newspaper have one of these fucking ombudspersons nowadays?

—Dave Mulcahey

Too Little, Too Late

Colin Powell's visit to Darfur only highlights the United States' inaction. *By Eric Reeves*

DESPITE RECENT HIGH-profile visits to Darfur, Sudan, by Secretary of State Colin Powell and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, the world's greatest humanitarian crisis continues to spin out of control. More than a year of genocidal war waged by Khartoum and its brutal Arab militia allies (the Janjaweed) against the targeted African populations has entailed the destruction of thousands of villages, systematic elimination of agricultural resources, mass executions and the deployment of rape as a weapon of war. The war has created 200,000 refugees

in neighboring Chad and displaced 1.2 million people. The crisis has overwhelmed international humanitarian response, despite belated efforts to ramp up food, shelter and medical supplies.

Transport capacity is woefully inadequate. For example, in June the U.N.'s World Food Program fed only 700,000 of the 1.2 million people targeted for aid. The onset of the heavy seasonal rains has severed many transport corridors, and numerous concentration camps to which the African populations have fled are either too insecure for humanitarian presence or will

not be accessible until October. Khartoum continues to obstruct aid, despite promises to the contrary.

Mortality rates are skyrocketing, with data from the U.S. Agency for International Development and humanitarian organizations indicating that 1,000 people, mainly children, are dying every day. Camps for the internally displaced have become extermination sites, with cholera, dysentery and malaria set to take huge tolls among badly weakened populations.

Though Darfur is rightly described as a humanitarian crisis, the political visits by Powell and Annan ironically highlight the most basic fact of the catastrophe: It has been engineered by Khartoum as a means of crushing the insurgency in Darfur that began in February 2003 as a response to longstanding political and economic marginalization. It is, in short, a genocide designed to consolidate central power, send an example to other marginalized populations in Sudan, and extend the Arabizing agenda of the ruling National Islamic Front.

Rather than confront these realities with credible threats of immediate humanitarian intervention, Powell and Annan are content to accept promises of improvement from Khartoum—a regime that has never, in 15 years of tyrannical rule, abided by a single agreement made with Sudanese outside the capital.

Annan refuses to characterize the realities of Darfur as "genocide" or even "ethnic cleansing." He has at least had the honesty to explain that this is a politically calculated omis-

sion, since prominent members of the United Nations such as China, Russia, Pakistan and Algeria would oppose such a designation and the resulting humanitarian intervention such a designation would entail. Expedient promises from Khartoum are thus deemed sufficient.

Powell also dodges the question of genocide, though with considerably less justification. U.S. diffidence and indecision are reflected in the floating of a U.N. Security Council resolution on Darfur that does nothing more than impose a toothless arms embargo on the Janjaweed militia (but not the regime that supplies them arms and logistics). The resolution creates an expansive 30-day period in which to assess the effects of these pointless sanctions.

Perversely, the trips by Powell and Annan only highlight the unwillingness of the international community to respond with appropriate action: humanitarian intervention that features urgent military protection of the acutely vulnerable camp populations and internationalizing the rail line from Port Sudan to Darfur, which offers the only means of adequate long-term aid.

But however morally obvious intervention to halt massive genocidal destruction in Africa may be, political callousness and cowardice are triumphing. The present mortality rate of 1,000 per day is expected to rise to more than 4,000 per day in late fall. The real lesson of Rwanda would seem to be that even with sufficient time to respond, genocide in Africa remains acceptable. ■

ERIC REEVES is a professor at Smith College. He has testified several times before Congress on the ongoing crisis in Sudan. His writings on the subject have appeared in *The Nation*, *the Washington Post*, *the Los Angeles Times* and many international publications.

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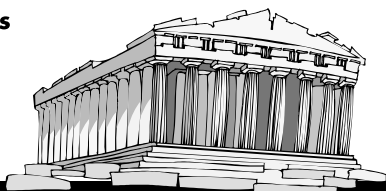
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After former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean's protest-fueled primary campaign crashed, he reconstituted his effort as Democracy for America (www.democracyforamerica.com). Mobilizing its Internet-coordinated grassroots base, Democracy for America will work for progressive candidates and long-term change in the Democratic Party. In *These Times* recently talked to Dean about the presidential race and his own work.

There's a hardcore anti-Bush sentiment, but at this point not a good deal of enthusiasm about Kerry as the candidate. Are there ways in which you think he could overcome that?

My view of all of Democratic politics is that we've been making a mistake. The Republicans figured it out before we did. We've got to energize the base voters and get them enthusiastic. The swing voters will come your way because they'll be swept up in the enthusiasm. We can make big steps towards change by electing John Kerry, because we'll have a much better Supreme Court, we'll have a real environmental policy, we'll have reasonable fiscal policy. So the case that I'd make to progressive voters is that there really is a big difference between John Kerry and George Bush.

From what you know now, especially with the prison abuse case and the documents about torture that were drafted by the administration, do you think there are acts for which senior officials might be indictable or impeachable?

I think for the Justice Department to sanction torture is pretty disgraceful. These people are looking more and more far out and more and more extreme right as we go along. [Attorney General John] Ashcroft is essentially throwing the Constitution out the window. And I actually believe the reason for the torture was mostly because of this ideological obsession with privatization. We've got a private mercenary army over there. That's crazy.

The administration's behaving in a bizarre way—hiring mercenary armies, sanctioning torture, secret documents, having the vice president try to influence the contracts, then claim that he didn't know anything about it but his chief of staff had the OK. This does not pass the believability test. These people are basically very similar to Nixon's administration. They believe that they're above the law and whatever means they choose are justified by the ends.

Do you think the upturn in the economy undercuts the jobs issue for Kerry?

No, not at all. The people who read the *Wall Street Journal* think the economy is getting better, and it probably is because their portfolios are getting better.

The people who work in factories, or used to work in factories, or don't have health insurance, they don't think the economy is getting better. And that situation's not going to be fixed as long as you run a half-trillion-dollar deficit. Most of the voters do not make \$200,000 a year. Therefore, they didn't see much of the president's tax cut. In fact, what they saw was property tax increases and healthcare insurance increases, because the president cut services in order to help pay for his tax cuts to his friends.

Do you have any specific things in mind to do yourself in the campaign?

This battle does not end on November 2, even if we win. We've got to reconstitute the Democratic Party. We haven't paid attention to small donors. We haven't

Dean's Permanent Campaign

By David Moberg

paid attention to grassroots activists. We need to get people enthusiastic, and that has to be done with the same kind of discipline that the right wing used to take over the Supreme Court, the Congress and the presidency.

What do you see Democracy for America doing?

What we do is mainly grassroots intensive support for candidates. And the other thing we do that most people don't do in the Democratic Party is we work in areas where we don't have any party organization left. I'm going to be in Mississippi and Texas, because if we're not willing to spread progressive messages elsewhere, nobody's ever going to change their mind, because they're never going to hear our message.

I would like to find a way after the election not to lay off the 4,000 grassroots activists that we are going to be putting in the field in Ohio, but to be ready to keep them on so we can start pushing issues like health insurance. Another thing is building constituencies and issues-based organizations, so when the next election cycle comes along you don't have to retrain a whole grassroots corps to go out and sell your message. This needs to be a permanent campaign. ■





House Call *By Rep. José E. Serrano*

With the money we've already sunk into Iraq, we could have provided medical insurance for every uninsured child in America for more than 12 years.

JOSÉ E. SERRANO has represented the South Bronx, New York, since 1990. He is the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the Commerce, Justice and State departments, as well as the judiciary, serves as a senior member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, and is a member of the Progressive Caucus.

Expenses We Cannot Afford

IN THE WANING DAYS OF THE KOREAN WAR, Dwight D. Eisenhower, America's great warrior president, said: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

How timely Eisenhower's words seem today, as the United States faces what is quickly becoming its largest budget deficit in history, deep cuts in social programs and local government, and troubling challenges to our civil liberties.

George Bush's misguided war in Iraq has led to hundreds of American deaths and thousands of horrific injuries for our soldiers, not to mention the tremendous destruction visited upon Iraq and its people. The independent 9/11 Commission completely discredited the administration's attempt to link Iraq with the 9/11 attacks, and we have yet to find the fabled weapons of mass destruction that posed such an imminent threat to our nation's security. Our international credibility has been seriously damaged, and anti-American sentiment around the world is sky high. And the administration's tendencies toward secrecy and arrogance helped lead to a horrific prisoner torture scandal that further shocked and angered the world.

The sad reality is that every day we pay the price in America for Bush's misadventure in Iraq.

First and foremost is the formidable cost of the war. It is difficult to comprehend what all those zeros mean, but the sad reality is that they represent billions of dollars worth of lost opportunities for ordinary Americans. The \$400 billion we are in the process of sinking into Iraq could have fundamentally transformed America—brought millions out of poverty, ended the deficit, improved our schools, trains and hospitals. With New York's share of the cost alone, we could have hired 214,000 school teachers in our state, built 161,000 housing units for New York families or put 175,000 more cops onto our streets. With the money we've already sunk into Iraq, we could have provided medical insurance for every uninsured child in America for more than 12 years.

These missed opportunities are not just today's losses. Studies consistently show that children provided proper education and healthcare go on to be more productive members of society. Every time we get another cop on the street, it's less likely that a woman will be raped, less likely that a home will be broken into, more likely that we'll be able to respond quickly when the next terrorist strike occurs.

We need to keep these costs in mind, because every bomb, every rebuilding contract, every warplane that goes up is paid for by all of us. And unlike the last Gulf War, when George Bush's father was able to persuade the world to pay for nearly 90 percent of the costs of conflict, this time around *we're* paying 90 percent, and this is a far more costly conflict. Already, adjusting for inflation, we've paid 26 times more for this war than the last.

But the costs are not only economic. The wars in Iraq and "against terror" have fanned widespread fears and anxieties 9/11 ignited—pushing our society to shed our reluctance to compromise many of the core values we hold dear. It would be a terrible irony if, to protect our civil liberties and our democratic way of life, we were to allow for the destruction of those same liberties that make us free.

September 11th changed New York and changed America. I will never forget the heartache, the pain, the soul-searching, the terrified tears of that awful day. There were many directions in which the president could have taken the nation after that day. He chose to use our anger, our disgust, and our sense of sacrifice and purpose to lead us into war against a nation that had nothing to do with those despicable attacks. In the aftermath of 9/11, we New Yorkers came together and showed the world what solidarity meant. But solidarity and patriotism can be misdirected, and it is time that we rethink our priorities. It is time that we channel our tremendous energy, ingenuity, and sense of solidarity and patriotism into building a new America, one that stands up for our children's right to live in a country that is prosperous, free, fair and secure. We owe them nothing less. ■





Cash and Kerry

THERE'S AN OLD YIDDISH PROVERB THAT SAYS, with money in your pocket you're wise and handsome and can sing well, too. I don't know how Kerry carries a tune, but he has been serenaded at recent fundraisers by everyone from Mary J. Blige and Willie Nelson to Yentl herself, Barbra Streisand.

I'm not convinced of Kerry's wisdom either, though he didn't pick Dick Gephardt as his running mate. But Kerry is certainly looking better these days—at least to the deep-pocketed Democratic donors, who have showered his campaign with more than \$180 million.

Kerry's fundraising success is remarkable, considering that as recently as February he had less than \$2.5 million cash on hand. Since securing the Democratic nod on Super Tuesday, Kerry has raised an average of \$1.2 million per day.

My first reaction to Kerry's fundraising success was elation. But after hammering the Bush campaign at every opportunity for its outrageous fundraising activities, I can't ignore Kerry's complicity in further crippling the campaign finance system. Bush may have opted out of the presidential public finance system first, but Kerry has copied his playbook.

At least a third of the \$220 million Bush has taken in so far has been collected by "Rangers" and "Pioneers," those 525 rainmakers who have raised at least \$200,000 or \$100,000, respectively, for the president. But Kerry, too, has relied on the largesse of big-dollar bundlers, with some 550 "Vice Chairs" (who have raised at least \$100,000) and "Co-Chairs" (at least \$50,000) accounting for at least \$40 million—and probably much more—of Kerry's fundraising tally.

The president also recently identified 62 "Super Rangers," most of whom have raised at least \$300,000 for the Republican National Committee on top of their efforts for Bush. But Kerry is backed by his own "Power Ranger," Haim Saban, who produced the kids' kung-fu show and is one of 17 "Trustees" who have collected at least \$250,000 for the Democratic National Committee.

Joining Saban on the lists of Trustees and "Vice Chairs" are several mega-fundraisers at the center of Clinton-era campaign finance scandals. Alan Solomont, a nursing home executive and former DNC finance chairman, allegedly parlayed his campaign donations and White House connections into weakened nursing home regulations. Beth Dozoretz allegedly helped arrange the last-minute presidential pardon of fugitive financier Marc Rich. Another Trustee and Kerry backer, former Texas Lt. Gov. Ben Barnes, is the man who

secured Dubya a slot in the Texas Air National Guard to avoid Vietnam.

Who else is bankrolling the Kerry campaign? All of the usual suspects: trial lawyers, Hollywood producers, Washington lobbyists, Wall Street executives. Looking over the list, it's hard to disagree with *Economist* writers John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, who observe in their new book *The Right Nation*: "The Democrats are marginally less addicted to corporate largesse than the K Street conservatives at the helm of the Republican Party, but only in the way that a coke-head is in less trouble than a heroin junkie."

For politicians addicted to corporate cash, the national conventions might as well be Studio 54. Corporations can still give unlimited "soft money" to convention "host committees." This year's conventions are expected to take in at least \$100 million, and that's not counting the millions more that will be spent on glitzy, after-hours soirees "honoring" key legislators and party officials. More than a dozen companies already have given at least \$1 million to the Democrats, including Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Fidelity Investments and Raytheon. Verizon, which has donated \$3 million to each party, is one of 21 companies that have given to both convention committees, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Others playing both sides include AT&T, AIG, Pfizer, Bristol-Myers Squibb, IBM and Microsoft.

For Democrats, continued coddling of corporate America only blurs the difference between Bush and Kerry—who already went to the same elite university, pledged the same secret fraternity and file in the same tax bracket. That's not the message to attract swing voters, whether they're blue-collar workers in battleground states or pragmatic Nader sympathizers.

Without an effective presidential public financing system, there's no hope of ever having a presidential contender who isn't personally wealthy, beholden to wealthy special interests or both. To his credit, Kerry pledged last fall to make "reform of the presidential public financing system a priority" and acknowledged public financing as the "most effective means for preserving the integrity of our electoral process." Of course, that was long before he had pocketed \$180 million.

Don't get me wrong. A Kerry victory will be driven by more than just money. But it's worth considering who will be calling the shots—and calling in their markers—in a Kerry administration. This will be a truly pivotal election only if the Democrats can deliver more than the same old song and dance. ■

For Democrats, continued coddling of corporate America only blurs the difference between Bush and Kerry—who already went to the same elite university, pledged the same secret fraternity and file in the same tax bracket.

CRAIG AARON is a senior editor at *In These Times* and an investigative reporter for *Public Citizen's Congress Watch*. The views expressed are his own.



When Left Is Right

Rank-and-file
Republican
lawmakers
are bucking
their party,
with fault
lines dividing
corporate
apologists
from
ideological
purists and
its working-
class
constituency.

HOW DOES TODAY'S REPUBLICAN PARTY FIT Wall Street bankers under the same tent as blue-collar America? How does a party unify those who seek to bathe corporations in taxpayer cash with those who want to curtail government spending?

If recent events in Congress are any indication, increasingly it doesn't.

On various issues, rank-and-file Republican lawmakers are bucking their party, with fault lines dividing corporate apologists from ideological purists and its working-class constituency. The gap is widening as the party's leadership in Washington becomes increasingly divorced from the concerns of average voters. And the split is forging an unlikely alliance between progressives and right-wing ideologues. In the process, the public is getting a glimpse of a Republican Party at war with itself.

On government spending, for instance, more and more conservatives have raised objections to corporate welfare and the burgeoning deficit. In the House last year, a vote to cut off government handouts to corporations that ship jobs overseas attracted 22 Republican yes votes. Similarly, criticism of the Bush budget was amplified by the archconservative Republican Study Committee, whose noted member Rep. Gil Gutknecht (R-Minn.) said Congress deserved answers about a budget that "borrows hundreds of billions of dollars from our children and grandchildren."

It was fiscal conservatives who joined Democrats to almost defeat the Medicare bill. With the president pushing for the massive HMO giveaway, the anti-entitlement right wing refused to play ball. When the bill was voted on, an NBC News correspondent reported watching "an invincible House GOP leadership now frantically trying to avoid a devastating defeat, having hit a brick wall of conservatives in their own party who are openly defying their pleas." The bill passed by just five votes.

Granted, the right and the left have different objectives. The right-wing purists want to cut all government spending; the left wants to eliminate unfair tax cuts and corporate giveaways. But beyond these "enemy-of-my-enemy-is-my-friend" alliances are other areas where the right is working with progressives toward the same goals.

Free-market conservatives and progressives are pushing legislation allowing seniors to purchase FDA-approved medicine from other countries. Both sides want lower prices. Sen. Trent Lott (yes, *that* Trent Lott) said, "I cannot explain to my mother any longer why she should pay twice or two-thirds more than what is

paid in Canada or Mexico." Republican governors have even challenged the Bush administration to allow their states to move forward with reimportation. But the Republican establishment refuses to defy its campaign donors in the pharmaceutical industry.

Job losses in the manufacturing sector have activated the consciences of conservatives like Rep. Donald Manzullo (R-Ill.), who chairs the House Small Business Committee. In a 2002 op-ed, Manzullo wrote: "Too many times we have voted for trade only to learn that corporations moved more of their operations or sourcing out of our districts and offshore, leaving behind hard-working Americans with families to feed and no jobs. Those people back in our districts sent us to Congress to represent their interests." The White House, wary of such GOP sentiments, announced last month that the Central American Free Trade Agreement would not be put to a vote until after the election.

Bucking the Republican Party establishment can even play to the conservative grassroots constituency. When the Bush FCC loosened media ownership rules, 12 Republican senators joined Democrats to pass a bill rejecting the decision. While progressives were backed by groups like MoveOn and Common Cause, conservatives were supported by the National Rifle Association and the Family Research Council. Their only roadblock was the House Republican leadership and a presidential veto threat.

Rural Republicans like Rep. Butch Otter (R-Idaho) sponsored bills with progressives to repeal parts of the USA PATRIOT Act.

And now some conservative lawmakers are invoking their political ideology to articulate positions against the war in Iraq. Rep. John Duncan (R-Tenn.) gave a speech saying, "The true conservative position, the traditional conservative position is against this war." He pointed out, "It is very much against every conservative tradition to support preemptive war."

If fissures like these keep growing in the GOP, the Republican National Committee will just wheel out more hot-button social issues. It's no surprise that Bush's first public event of the 2004 campaign season was the introduction of a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.

But this strategy will fail. While social issues can raise passions, the Republican Party revolt is fueled by ideology and grassroots outrage. Every time lawmakers go home to their districts, they hear it from constituents.

And the more their party ignores this outrage, the bigger the price they will pay in November. ■

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Growing the Green Party

HERE'S A STORY THAT YOU WON'T SEE IN THE corporate media: The Green Party is growing—getting bigger, stronger and better-organized in every election cycle. Even after the infamous 2000 presidential election, when the media and Democrats blamed us for Bush's selection and ignored the blatantly illegal and biased behavior of Jeb Bush, Katherine Harris and a Republican Supreme Court majority, our numbers have grown.

In 1996, the Green Party was organized in 10 states, guaranteed a ballot line in just five and had elected 40 officeholders. Today, we have parties organized in 44 states, 23 with guaranteed ballot access, and hundreds of Greens elected to public office, including the mayors of Santa Monica, California, and New Paltz, New York, and the president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. And, for the first time in our party's history, we have two registered Greens as our presidential and vice presidential candidates, myself and Patricia LaMarche, respectively.

The goals of the Cobb-LaMarche campaign are to present a genuine, progressive alternative, grow the Green Party and have this year's election culminate with the removal of the White House's illegitimate occupant.

We are speaking truth to power in this campaign. We are the only party calling for decisive action on catastrophic global climate change and our addiction to fossil fuels, a living wage, universal healthcare under a national insurance plan, real steps toward racial equality, an end to the so-called USA PATRIOT Act, and the removal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

We are also confronting the "spoiler" issue head on. When this question is raised, it provides us with an opportunity to talk about reforming a flawed electoral system. There isn't a spoiler problem. The problem is an antiquated, anti-democratic electoral system that forces people to vote for a candidate they really don't support in order to keep an even worse candidate out of office. We deserve a more democratic and more efficient electoral system, representing the diversity of people and opinions in our country.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) is one solution. IRV allows people to rank candidates in order of preference so that if your first-choice candidate doesn't win enough votes to make it into a runoff, your second choice vote is automatically considered. IRV is used to elect officeholders in Australia, Ireland and London and is soon to

be implemented in San Francisco. (Learn more about IRV, proportional representation and other reforms to ensure fair elections on the Web site for the Center for Voting & Democracy at www.fairvote.org.)

Third parties have played a critical role throughout American history. In their heyday, third parties elected mayors, governors and members of Congress. In fact, the entire social fabric of our society was woven from ideas that originated within third parties: the abolition of slavery, women's right to vote, Social Security, the 40-hour work week and the direct election of U.S. senators, to name just a few.

What we are trying to accomplish through our work with the Green Party is greater than any one campaign or any one election. We are in this for the long haul.

One of the key steps to growing our party and eliminating a dangerous global threat is ensuring the removal of George W. Bush from office. Bush is a huge problem. But he is not *the* problem. *The* problem is a corporate-military-industrial-prison-judicial system that is destroying the planet. We need to address the larger problem, but we also need to remove the most immediate

threat to global peace—and that means getting Bush out of office.

I am in no way suggesting that anyone vote for John Kerry. Kerry is a corporatist and a militarist who supported the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the passage of the Patriot Act. He also opposes real universal health care and a living wage. However, although the differences between Bush and Kerry may be incremental, they are not inconsequential.

In 40 or so states the Electoral College votes have, for all intents and purposes, already been cast. For example, Massachusetts, California and New York will go to the Democrats; Utah, Wyoming and Texas to the Republicans. In these states, where our message is "Don't waste your vote," a vote for the Green Party is a powerful tool. In the battleground states that will decide the election, we understand if you won't vote for our ticket this time. That's OK. A vote is a powerful and personal decision. You can register Green and support us in every other way possible, especially with votes for state and local Green candidates and contributions of your time and money.

With the strategy we have articulated, we will grow the Green Party, provide voters with a genuine alternative and make the world a safer and saner place to live. ■



We are the only party calling for decisive measures against catastrophic global climate change and our addiction to fossil fuels, universal healthcare, real racial equality, an end to the Patriot Act and removal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

DAVID COBB
is the Green Party's candidate for president. Learn more about the Cobb-LaMarche campaign at www.votecobb.org.



The First Stone *By Joel Bleifuss*

The July Surprises

We must now infer that for the past two years the administration has allowed Osama bin Laden to run free in order to kill or capture him as a pre-election publicity stunt.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION is trying to manipulate the war on terrorism to further President George W. Bush's re-election efforts.

The New Republic's John B. Judis, Spencer Ackerman and Massoud Ansari report that the Bush administration has been pressuring Pakistan to capture or kill "high-value targets" (HVTs) Osama bin Laden, his deputy Ayman al Zawahiri and Taliban leader Muhammed Omar before the upcoming election.

One source in Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's equivalent of the CIA, said: "The Pakistani government is really desperate and wants to flush out bin Laden and his associates after the latest pressures from the U.S. administration to deliver before the U.S. elections."

A second source, in the Pakistani Interior Ministry, said: "The Musharraf government has a history of rescuing the Bush administration. They now want Musharraf to bail them out when they are facing hard times in the coming elections."

A third source, who works under the ISI director Lieutenant General Ehsan ul-Haq, said: "[The Pakistanis] have been told at every level that apprehension or killing of HVTs before [the] election is [an] absolute must. ... The last 10 days of July deadline has been given repeatedly by visitors to Islamabad and during [ul-Haq's] meetings in Washington." This source said a White House aide told ul-Haq last spring, "It would be best if the arrest or killing of [any] HVT were announced on 26, 27 or 28 [of] July." (The Democratic Convention opens on July 26.)

A fourth source, a Pakistani general, fears that if Pakistan doesn't deliver the HVTs before the elec-



tion, the Bush administration will focus attention on the role Pakistan's security establishment played in nuclear physicist A.Q. Khan's transfer of nuclear technology to Iran, North Korea and Libya. The general said: "If we don't find these guys by the election, they are going to stick this whole nuclear mess up our asshole."

The investigative report validates what many have long thought: Bush is manipulating the war on terrorism to further his political fortunes. In effect, we must now infer that for the past two years the administration has allowed Osama bin Laden to run free in order to kill or capture him as a pre-election publicity stunt.

Recall the 1980 election when one-time CIA director and Reagan running mate George H.W. Bush negotiated a secret deal in October with representatives of the Ayatollah Khomeini to delay the release of the 52 American hostages held in Iran until after the election to ensure Jimmy Carter's defeat. (For the most

definitive information on what has become known as the October Surprise check out www.consortium-news.com/archive/xfile.html.)

The Bush administration will no doubt use its influence in the media to try to discredit Judas et al., in the same way it tried to denature Michael Moore following the release of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, using friends in the press like *Newsweek's* Michael Isikoff.

In the June 28 issue, Isikoff dismissed *Fahrenheit 9/11* as "a mélange of investigative journalism, partisan commentary and conspiracy theories." He goes on to dispute three of what he calls "Moore's most provocative allegations," thereby leading the unsuspecting reader to wonder what else Moore has fabricated. More on that later. First some history about Isikoff's own "mélange."

In April 1989, John Kerry's Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations released an exhaustive

report that concluded that the Contras were involved in drug trafficking and that Reagan administration officials were aware of that involvement.

In an April 14, 1989, *Washington Post* article, Isikoff trivialized the report's findings and asserted that claims of drug trafficking by high-level Contras "could not be substantiated." Subsequently, *Newsweek's* "Conventional Wisdom Watch" dubbed Kerry "a randy conspiracy buff."

The *Post* had little more to say on the subject until the fall of 1991, when Gen. Manuel Noriega went to trial on drug-trafficking charges in Miami. Isikoff then wrote: "Allegations that the federal government worked with known drug dealers to arm the Contras have been raised for years, but congressional investigations in the late 1980s found little evidence to back charges that it was an organized activity approved by high-level U.S. officials."

That assertion was soon contradicted by the U.S. government's own witnesses against Noriega. In November 1991, convicted Colombian drug lord and government witness Carlos Lehder told the court that an unnamed U.S. official offered to allow him to smuggle cocaine into the United States in exchange for use of a Bahamian island that he owned as part of the Contra supply route. Lehder went on to testify that the Colombian cartel had donated about \$ 10 million to the Contras.

At this point, the *Post* finally took notice. "The Kerry hearings didn't get the attention they deserved at the time," its editorial concluded. "The Noriega trial brings this sordid aspect of the Nicaraguan engagement to fresh public attention." The *Post* editorial writer might have added, "Indeed, our own reporter Michael Isikoff let us down."

Isikoff did a number on Bill and Hilary Clinton promoting the Whitewater Scandal. In a series of *Post* stories in late 1993 and early 1994, Isikoff, citing unnamed sources, offered ominous-sounding revelations about bureaucratic maneuvers ("Justice Department officials are moving forward with two separate inquiries that have been expanded") and unsubstanti-

ated speculation from more unnamed sources ("Bill and Hillary Clinton 'could possibly have benefited from the alleged scheme.'") The rest of the press followed suit and a publicly funded \$52 million investigation turned up nothing.

Now Isikoff has set his sights on Moore.

Isikoff contends that, contrary to the facts presented in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the six charted airplane flights that flew the Saudis out of the United States "didn't begin until September 14, after airspace reopened." The movie says this:

It turns out that the White House approved planes to pick up the bin Ladens and numerous other Saudis. At least six private jets and nearly two-dozen commercial planes carried the Saudis and the bin Ladens out of the U.S. after September 13. In all, 142 Saudis, including 24 members of the bin Laden family were allowed to leave the country.

Indeed, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported in June that, according to Tampa International Airport records, on September 13, while most of the nation's air traffic was still grounded, a private jet landed in Tampa and picked up three young Saudi men and then left.

Isikoff also disputes the movie's claim that the Carlyle Group—a private investment firm in which both George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and members of the bin Laden family were involved—profited "from September 11 because it owned United Defense, a military contractor." Isikoff contends, "United Defense's \$11 billion Crusader artillery rocket system developed for the U.S. Army is one of the only weapons systems canceled by the Bush administration."

Again, Isikoff is twisting the truth. The Crusader contract was canceled after the Carlyle Group sold United Defense. *Fahrenheit 9/11* says this:

September 11th guaranteed that United Defense was going to have a very good year. Just six weeks after 9/11 Carlyle filed to take United Defense public and in December made a one day profit of \$237 million dollars.

On January 10, 2002, the *Los Angeles Times's* Mark Fineman, wrote:

On a single day last month, Carlyle earned \$237 million selling shares in United Defense Industries, the Army's fifth-largest contractor. The stock offering was well timed: Carlyle officials say they decided to take the company public only after the September 11 attacks. ... On September 26 [2001], the Army signed a \$655-million modified contract with United Defense through April 2003 to complete the Crusader's development phase. In October, the company listed the Crusader, and the attacks themselves, as selling pints for its stock offering.

Critics of the film are worried that *Fahrenheit 9/11* could have an effect on the presidential election. After all, the film has so far raked in \$60 million while showing on 1,725 screens.

To fight back, some unknown person or organization hired the PR firm Russo, Marsh & Rogers of Sacramento, California. The company, which has strong ties to the Republican Party, set up a Web site, MoveAmericaForward.org, to attack *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The PR flacks who managed the site encouraged:

Americans who found in Moore's movie *Fahrenheit 9/11* an attempt to undermine the war on terror, to let movie theater operators know about their objections. Think about it. ... If you walked into a Wal-Mart store and saw they were selling merchandise that attacked the military, our troops and America's battle against Islamic terrorism, wouldn't you complain to the store manager or write a letter and ask that they not sell that product because it was undermining our national effort?

Others on the right aim to counter Moore with a movie of their own making, *Michael Moore Hates America: A Documentary That Tells the Truth about a Great Nation*.

That will be a hard sell to anyone who sees the film. *Fahrenheit 9/11* makes clear that Michael Moore loves America. It's the Bush administration he can't stand. ■

Make Judicious Appointments

BY HANS JOHNSON

THE MOST DANGEROUS OBSCENITY SPEWING from the seat of government of late is not the vulgar outburst of Dick Cheney, displacing onto Pat Leahy his pique at a national electorate numbering his days as veep. Instead it takes the form of an interoffice memorandum. Leaked nearly two years after its delivery to White House counsel Al Gonzalez, Jay Bybee's August 2002 blueprint on how to beat a torture rap under international law is the one permission slip Bush sought from the rest of the world. Seldom has a white paper written on the public's dime given *carte blanche* to such cruelty.

Yet unlike Cheney, Bybee cannot be roused from the public payroll. Even after flouting conscience and case law to excuse abuse of detainees based on "complete discretion" of "executive power," he has political immunity. Why? In March 2003, long before his torture

than four years, the White House has fine-tuned a system to ram through a slew of judges deferential to corporations and who hold a dim view of privacy rights and nondiscrimination, particularly as they pertain to gay people.

To do this, Bush and Co. exploited a far-reaching and well-oiled machine of law-school alums and chums manufactured by the Federalist Society. The National Center for Responsive Philanthropy recently reported how much the wealthiest right-wing foundations lavished on the club (\$4 million in the waning days of the Clinton era alone). More than previous Republican regimes, Bush has counted on this network for judicial candidates like Bybee, and then on the airwaves of Big Intolerance Inc. (radio and TV moguls like James Dobson and Pat Robertson) to tout his chosen nominees. It's working, with Prussian efficiency.

This black-robed vanguard and its claue have stoked a bonfire beneath each rights-based interpretation of the Constitution since the Warren court's obit of Jim Crow in 1954. Given the records and relative youth of several Bush appointees, plentiful and explosive opinions from these judges are poised to detonate like land mines far into the future.

The most recent cause for alarm is James Leon Holmes. Holmes' views smack of Christian Reconstructionism, a strand of austere theology that advocates replacement of secular law with strict readings of scripture. "The final reunion of church and state will take place at the end of time," Holmes told a gathering two years ago. "Christ will claim a definitive political power of all creation, inaugurating an entirely new society based on the supernatural." From a federal judge?

"This is one of the most divisive nominations put forth by the Bush administration, and that is saying a

Democrats must make a campaign issue of Bush's full-court attack on basic values, such as liberty and equal protection.

memo saw the light of cyberspace, Bush succeeded in appointing Bybee to the federal bench, one promotion away from the Supreme Court.

How Bybee gained this seat on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals says as much about this administration's degraded standard of jurisprudence as it does about its dogged funneling of far-right ideologues into lifetime slots on the bench.

Don't let Michael Moore's depiction in *Fahrenheit 9/11* fool you: Getting Caspian crude across Afghanistan isn't the only pipeline Bush has pushed. In less

lot,” said Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

“Holmes’ proper place is nowhere near the authority of the federal bench,” said Gloria Feldt, president of Planned Parenthood. “His infamous comment that rape exceptions to abortion bans are unnecessary because conception from rape happens ‘as often as snow falls in Miami’ demonstrates both his blatant disregard for the facts and his appalling lack of compassion for the 300,000 American women who are raped each year and the 25,000 of those women who end up pregnant as a result.”

Given the green light to extremism created by one-party rule along Pennsylvania Avenue, it’s no wonder the delusional reactionary Sun Myung Moon received such a warm welcome on Capitol Hill earlier this year. Yet Moon’s emergence is a sideshow next to Bush’s exploitation of religion to foment the judicial juggernaut and feed his own reelection.

This Bush strategy has been a boon to the GOP’s corporate contributors, who exported jobs and lined their pockets while his evangelical base was distracted by a steady stream of anti-gay propaganda.

GOP leaders pressed for a July Senate vote on a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. And the Bush-Cheney campaign has sought to extend the sugar-high of hate in swing states using petition drives to trigger votes this fall on similar bans in state constitutions. As of mid-July, eight such proposals were headed before voters, with one, in Missouri, to be decided on the August 3 primary ballot.

By making all this possible, GOP fundraisers really live up to the “pioneer” label the campaign has proudly pinned on them: They are carrying the country into an uncharted no-man’s land of lower wages, diminished opportunity, snipped-away safety nets, and little recourse through the courts for anyone at risk. And now they have one more foot soldier doing their bidding from the bench. On a largely party-line vote July 6, Republicans won Holmes’ confirmation by the Senate, 51 to 46.

Democrats must make a campaign issue of Bush’s full-court attack on basic values, such as liberty and equal protection. They must do two things.

First, progressives must take the Kerry campaign slogan to heart and realize that restoring balance to the federal judiciary is at the core of “letting America be America again.” It means discarding the paralyzing presumption that court appointments are so

much esoterica, or “inside baseball,” as one dismissive Washingtonian said.

It means turning nominations like the privacy-phobic Holmes and the gay-baiting Claude Allen into millstones on the necks of faux-conservative politicians like the radical Bush. Having taken a far-right detour from their libertarian rhetoric, these Ashcroft-like acolytes want a government so small it can fit in your bedroom.

And the judiciary’s traction as a campaign issue is not limited to sexuality politics. As the case of wrongfully detained terrorist suspect Brandon Mayfield of Portland, Oregon, illustrates, many Americans stand to lose when the U.S. government gets all gimlet-eyed toward its citizens. The FBI subjected Mayfield, an attorney, to an investigation so probing it would make a proctologist wince. Suspecting him of involvement in the March subway bombings in Madrid, they took loads of evidence from Mayfield’s office and home. Among the latter were “miscellaneous Spanish documents,” which as the *New York Times* noted with restraint, “turned out to be Spanish homework belonging to Mr. Mayfield’s children.”

For progressives, bringing the issue of the bench home to voters also means articulating the stakes involved in concrete ways that play in Peoria. Such was the impact of the simple question framed by NARAL-Pro-ChoiceAmerica in the early ’90s, “Who Decides?” That message has proved its staying power, echoing down the Mall in Washington again this April when a million abortion-rights backers came to put the issue of Supreme Court appointments front and center in the election-year debate.

Second, progressives must build an infrastructure to promote qualified liberal candidates for the bench. This network has strong existing foundations to build on, from the American Constitution Society to the wise and determined advocacy clearinghouse Alliance For Justice. The lesson for progressives in the rehashing of Reagan’s legacy is that at the dawn of the GOP’s 12-year reign, Reagan’s team cre-



ated a delivery system for moving right-wing ideologues from classrooms, faculty offices, think tanks, and the temples of commerce onto the bench and then up the judicial food chain. For every extremist like Robert Bork who got bounced, several others made it through without meaningful public scrutiny or Senate criticism.

Beyond electing Kerry-Edwards, progressives must help to restore a Democratic majority in the Senate. The party can pick up two or more seats this year, which would limit foot-dragging over Kerry nominees. In tactical terms, retaking the Senate could prevent derailing of liberal and moderate appointees by denying GOPers the bully pulpits possessed by committee chairs. And it could deaden demands, like those of the last six years of the Clinton administration, that Democratic aspirants be paired or packaged with reactionary counterparts in order to proceed.

Since the Republican takeover in 1994, Democrats have made feasts of such half-loaves. But with the political landscape shifting in our favor this year, we need to raise our standards and seize the day when it dawns for us next year. ■

HANS JOHNSON writes on labor, religion and politics for *In These Times*.



Exercise Fiscal Responsibility

BY DEAN BAKER AND HEATHER BOUSHEY

THE UNITED STATES HAS JUST BEEN THROUGH a quarter-century of economic mismanagement. It is important to keep this fact in mind when considering the budget priorities for the next Kerry administration (we hope), because the economy may intervene in ways that force a reconsideration of the best-laid plans.

Put simply, the large budget deficits of the Reagan administrations and the current Bush administration will make limiting the size of the deficit an unavoidable priority. While the Clinton-era stock bubble has largely deflated, the dollar bubble that the Clinton administration actively promoted persists, as does the huge (and growing) trade deficit—the inevitable result of an overvalued dollar.

The exact course of the dollar bubble is impossible to predict, but no economist believes that the United States will be able to continue to indefinitely borrow

\$650 billion a year (6.0 percent of GDP) from abroad. A falling dollar will lead to higher inflation and declining living standards because imported goods will become increasingly expensive, which will seriously complicate economic policymaking.

Finally, at some point, the housing bubble will burst. The timing of this collapse is unpredictable, but is likely to follow rising interest rates. There are good reasons for believing that it will collapse soon, but there also were reasons for believing it would collapse two years ago. The collapse of the housing bubble will not only decimate the construction industry, it will quickly end a massive wave of consumption fueled by mortgage refinancing and home equity loans. As a result, when the housing bubble does collapse, we will enter a recession, possibly a severe one.

Understanding this economic situation is important because it limits our ability to address pressing bud-

get priorities. Most importantly, a government should always be able to use its tax and spending policy to fight short-term economic difficulties. For example, if the collapse of the housing bubble leads to a recession, the goal of deficit reduction (an important priority) should be temporarily abandoned in order to provide stimulus through new spending and tax cuts oriented at low- and middle-income families. In addition to deficit reduction, the other top priorities of the Kerry administration should be reining in an out-of-control defense budget and meeting a set of long-neglected social needs, most importantly by fixing the healthcare system and addressing the need for universal pre-kindergarten.

The size of the current deficit provides a real basis for concern even for those of us who are not deficit hawks. To fund the general budget (almost everything except Social Security and most of the Medicare program), the government currently takes in about \$1,200 billion a year in revenue. The spending level is roughly 50 percent higher, or \$1,800 billion a year. This deficit of \$600 billion is equal to about 5.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). It is not necessary to balance the budget, but the deficit does have to be brought into a range of 3 percent of GDP to be sustainable. And the only way to reach that 3 percent is to implement tax increases and/or spending cuts in the range of \$300 billion a year.

Taking back the Bush tax cuts goes a substantial portion of the way toward correcting this shortfall. Taking back the entire tax cut would raise close to \$200 billion annually. Simply taking back the portion of the tax cut going to the richest 2 percent of families (as Sen. John Kerry has proposed) would raise close to \$100 billion a year. Other progressive taxes, notably a tax on financial speculation, could go far toward bringing the deficit into line.

In addition, defense spending must be seriously readjusted in order to close the budget gap. The Bush administration has increased the annual defense budget by more than \$110 billion (1.0 percent of GDP), with virtually no debate whatsoever. The pursuit of the war on terrorism is a recipe for endless interventions and ever-larger military budgets, but it would be difficult to claim it is making the country more secure. The Kerry administration will have to develop a serious defense policy, which should allow substantial savings, presumably getting the military budget down to levels comparable to those seen in

the Clinton administration.

While the Kerry administration must get the deficits down to manageable levels, continued neglect of key social needs will be more harmful to the economy and society than a large deficit. Healthcare must be the top priority on this list. Already, nearly 70 million people go without health care insurance for at least some part of the year. This number is sure to grow as more employers drop coverage or, as is happening more frequently, drop coverage for dependents. Recent policy fixes, such as the expansion of Medicaid under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), did little to stem the rise in the uninsured. There are indications that the expansion of SCHIP may have only persuaded many low-wage employers to drop coverage for dependents altogether and encourage their workers to sign their children up for SCHIP instead.

But the problem is not the uninsured. The problem is that the U.S. healthcare

The other social need that desperately cries for attention is childcare. Most mothers now work outside the home. As a result, they need safe, enriching, and affordable childcare. Spending money to develop full-day pre-kindergarten, attached to the public school system, would not only aid parents juggling work and family, but it would help children succeed in school. Currently, only the lowest income children have access to subsidized childcare. Even the bulk of this group (around 85 percent) do not receive any funds. Yet, difficulties accessing childcare—and especially pre-school—is a problem that is felt by families far up the income ladder.

One other problem that should not be neglected, even if it may not require large outlays, is global warming. The consequences of global warming for the planet are enormous. Restrictions on emissions of greenhouse gases will probably be more important than budget dollars in dealing with

A government should always be able to use its tax and spending policy to fight short-term economic difficulties.

system is broken, which has led to rapidly escalating costs and deteriorating quality of care. The United States pays more than twice as much per person than the average for rich countries, yet its healthcare statistics rank near the bottom. Unless the system is repaired—along the lines of a universal Medicare system—costs will continue to rise and the number of people without insurance or with inadequate insurance will grow.

Fixing the healthcare system and extending coverage should save money, even in the short-run. For example, the country currently spends more than \$200 billion a year on prescription drugs because the government gives drug companies patent monopolies. If drugs were sold in a competitive market, and the government funded research, the savings would be on the order of \$120 billion a year. Savings on administrative costs and excessive doctors' salaries also could more than offset the cost of covering the uninsured.

the problem. But some spending on developing clean technologies, as well as adjustment assistance for displaced workers, will be essential.

Finally, it is important to note one item that does not need addressing—Social Security. The program is completely solvent for the next 50 years, as a new report from the Congressional Budget Office just confirmed. Nonetheless, the business community and some in the corporate media establishment would desperately love to see Social Security attacked—apparently in the belief that it gives too much money to retired workers. The public should have their hatchets ready for any politician who tries to steal their Social Security benefits, otherwise the corporate media and wealthy campaign contributors will become powerful enough to gut the program. ■

DEAN BAKER and **HEATHER BOUSHEY** are economists at the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, D.C.

Forge a Coalition with Labor

BY DAVID MOBERG

GEORGE BUSH HAS BEEN NO FRIEND OF workers. He has mismanaged the economy, attacked workers' rights on the job, redistributed income to the wealthy, engaged in an illegitimate war in Iraq, and offered deeply flawed plans for health care, education, Social Security and other major government programs. In short, Bush is waging a war at home on American workers. Bad as his policies have been, however, they are but a foretaste of what will come if Bush is re-elected.

Despite some progressives' reservations about Kerry, he has committed himself to a wide swath of labor's agenda.

Bush will be the first president since Herbert Hoover to end his term with fewer jobs than when he started. A recession after the late '90s bubble was inevitable, but Bush policies—fixated on long-term tax cuts for the rich rather than public spending or temporary tax relief for the middle and working class—were a poor stimulus to the economy.

The tax cuts also leave a legacy of record budget deficits—deficits that will be used by Republicans to justify cutbacks in social spending. If re-elected, Bush likely will propose privatizing Social Security, education and Medicare (as the pro-corporate prescription benefits plan begins to do). While increased military spending provides some stimulus, it takes money away from investment in

infrastructure, education and research that could create jobs now and in the future.

Driven by a loss of roughly 3 million manufacturing jobs since August 2000, the United States has experienced a net loss of 1.3 million jobs since March 2001. But the problem is not just job loss. Despite some encouraging gains earlier this year—tempered by surprisingly weak job creation in June—Bush's policies, according to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), have produced 2 million fewer jobs than he predicted during last year's round of tax cuts. And according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, since the beginning of the year, 2 million unemployed workers have lost unemployment benefits because Bush refused to extend federal payments.

Even those who are working have lost ground. The economy has picked up, productivity continues to grow faster than wages, and newly created jobs pay, on average, 13 percent less than those that were lost. According to the EPI, real hourly wages, which had grown very slightly during Bush's tenure, have declined since November 2003, returning to where they were in late 2001.

The rapid increase in offshoring skilled service jobs, which compounded the problems created by the continued shift of manufacturing overseas, is a small but important part of the total loss. Yet the Bush administration hailed this development as a boon to business at the same time it fought against providing trade adjustment assistance to displaced service workers.

Globalization intensifies the downward pressure on wages created by a weak labor market. Bush's refusal to raise the minimum wage—now, in real terms, 30 percent below its peak in 1968—adds to the problem.

With consumer debt at record highs and interest rates heading upwards, workers will be even more squeezed, consequently slowing any economic recovery.

Bush's overall economic policies affect all working people—those currently employed and those hoping to enter or retire from the labor market. The labor movement is the key force resisting these trends; its work benefits members most but also boosts the fortunes of the unorganized.

Labor, however, has been under assault. On matters big and small, Bush and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao have time and again shown their hostility to organized labor. For example, when Bush hosted the G-8 Summit, he refused to meet with international labor leaders—the first such snub in 27 years by a summit host. (Even Reagan, Bush I and Margaret Thatcher met with labor when they hosted summits.)

The substance of Bush's policies hurts even more. For instance, the administration changed the laws on overtime pay thereby denying millions of workers overtime protection. Even though the Republican-controlled Senate voted in May to prohibit implementation of rules that would deprive those currently eligible, the House Republican leadership, ignoring the pleas of some Republicans, has refused to bring similar legislation to the floor.

Bush and Chao eliminated many of Clinton's pro-labor initiatives, including long-delayed rules to prevent cumulative trauma disorders, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, and the federal government's labor-management cooperation programs. The administration slashed enforcement of workplace safety and work standards and withdrew two-dozen planned safety regulations. Toward the end of his term, Clinton trade negotiators took modest steps in agreements with Jordan and Cambodia that linked U.S. market access to improved labor protection, but Bush has refused to include labor or environmental protections in fast-track trade negotiation legislation, the proposed hemispheric expansion of NAFTA or any of his administration's trade agreements. He even refused to investigate a well-researched petition about China's violation of labor rights.

Unions themselves have been targeted. In 2002, the administration threatened to get an injunction against a strike by West Coast longshoremen when employers had already locked out workers. And, earlier this year, Chao tried imposing massive new reporting requirements for unions, but a federal judge

temporarily delayed this costly harassment.

Most significantly, the Bush administration is threatening workers' fundamental right to organize. Following 9/11, the administration used national security as an excuse to take away collective bargaining rights for roughly 200,000 federal workers, already having begun a plan to privatize 850,000 federal jobs. "Using the tragedy of 9/11 to do that is evil," says AFL-CIO organizing director Stewart Acuff. "More than our share of union members have gone to Afghanistan and Iraq, and union members were the ones who responded on 9/11."

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), dominated by Republicans with anti-labor track records, recently agreed to rule on the legitimacy of "card checks"—the practice of organizing workers by getting employers to recognize the union after a majority sign union cards. With employers effectively using NLRB election procedures as a tool against organizing, more unions are turning to such card checks as a mechanism for union recognition. With this case, the board could undermine the legitimacy of card checks, which Rep. Charles Norwood (R-Ga.) has proposed prohibiting altogether, however the decision won't come until after the election.

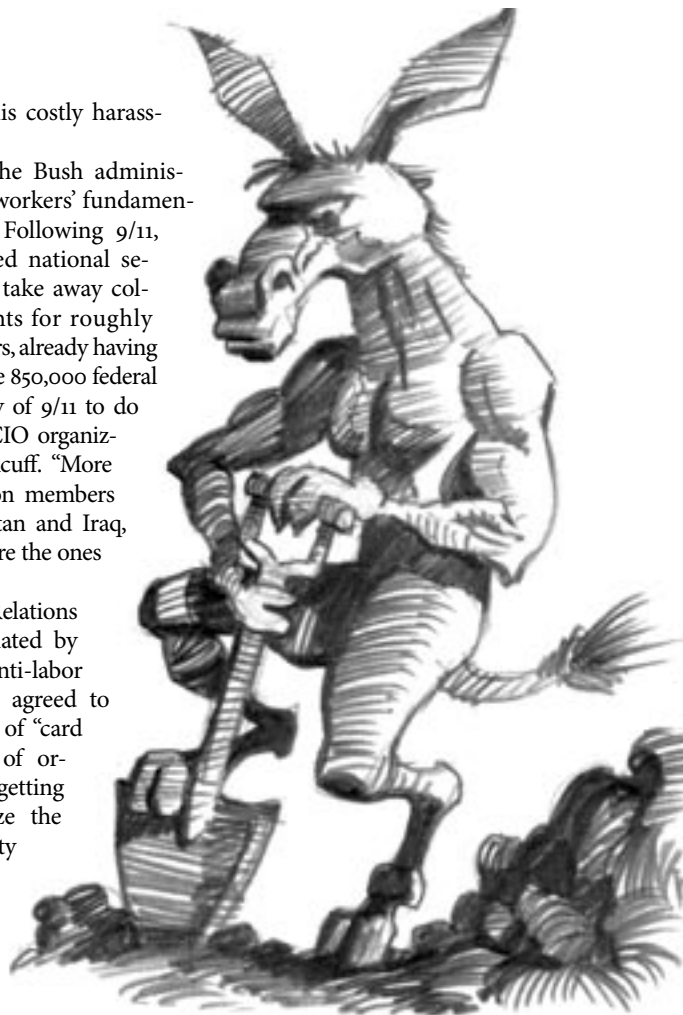
In contrast, Sen. John Kerry has promised to support and sign the Employee Free Choice Act. The act would require the NLRB to certify a union as bargaining agent if a majority of workers sign authorization cards, as well as to impose injunctions and fines if management attempts to prevent workers from joining a union, and to provide mediation and arbitration if bargaining does not promptly produce a first contract. Currently, 31 senators and 205 representatives are co-sponsors of the legislation, which is a top legislative priority for organized labor. In June unions collected and sent more than a million postcards supporting the legislation to Kerry and Bush.

The act could provide an enormous boost to labor, especially since a growing number of unions are primed to expand their organizing efforts, and their success is crucial not just for the labor movement but pro-

gressive politics as a whole. "Giving workers the real, unfettered right to form their own unions will do more for rebuilding the labor movement and fueling progressive movements and legislation than almost any single other legislative act you could imagine," Acuff says.

Despite some progressives' reservations about Kerry, he has committed himself to a wide swath of labor's agenda, such as reversing Bush's tax cuts for those with incomes greater than \$200,000, protecting Social Security and Medicare while expanding access to health insurance, raising the minimum wage, eliminating tax incentives to move jobs overseas, reviewing existing trade agreements, and incorporating labor and environmental protections in future agreements.

But from organized labor's perspective, the key contrast in the presidential race is that a second Bush administration is likely to further reduce workers' right to organize, and Kerry has pledged to expand that right. And it's a key contrast not only for unions, but for the future of any progressive politics. ■



Be A Good Steward

BY ADAM WERBACH

WHEN JOHN KERRY ASSUMES THE presidency in January, he'll most likely face the same divided Congress George W. Bush did, and, like Bush he'll need to rely on historic events and gullible senators from the opposite party to push through even a modest legislative agenda.

Facing these challenges, Bush has achieved far more of his environmental agenda of self-regulation and under-enforcement through executive action than legislative proposals before Congress. It's hard to imagine that Congress would vote to transfer billions of dollars from California consumers to energy companies—or stop enforcing the nation's environmental laws and let corporate polluters off the hook for paying to clean up toxic waste—yet Bush has achieved all this and more through executive action. With acknowledgements to the current president, what follows is a list of four executive actions President Kerry could rip from President Bush's playbook to create a new sustainable century.

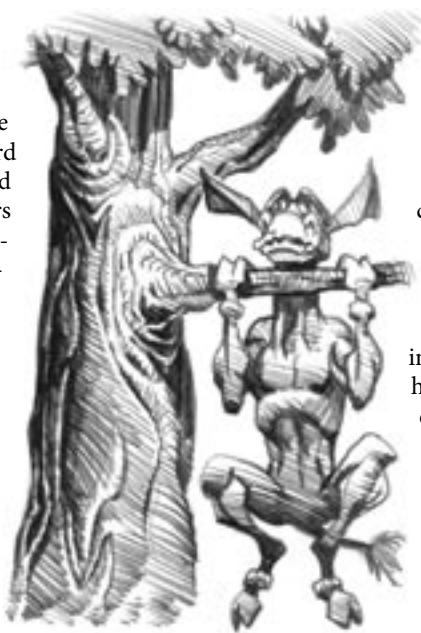
Let the EPA Enforce the Law

At the same time Florida Gov. Jeb Bush was calling his brother to congratulate him on the Supreme Court's decision on the Florida election, Environmental Protection Agency regulators were celebrating an important Clean Air Act victory. Two of the country's biggest utilities had settled government lawsuits and committed to cut pollution from their aging coal-fired power plants by more than half a million tons a year—doggedly pursued by Eric Schaeffer, director of the EPA's Office of Regulatory Enforcement. The victory was short-lived. Power-company

lobbyists descended on the new Bush administration and helped write an administrative revision to the Clean Air Act that exempted old power plants from upgrading their pollution-control technology when they performed upgrades on the plants. The result: The dirty power plants could continue to pollute as long as they kept running. The administration encouraged power plants to wait for

the Clean Air Act rewrites, rather than accept settlements. The administration then proposed a 13 percent cut in the enforcement budget for the EPA. Shaeffer and others quit in protest.

Kerry should treat environmental crime with the same ferocity that the Bush administration has pursued drug offenses. His first change should be tripling the enforcement budget for the EPA and going after power companies, corporate hog farms, oil refineries, and diesel engine manufacturers that systematically violate U.S. environmental laws. In addition, he should direct the EPA to enforce a three strikes strategy for corporate polluters, in which companies fined three times for violating pollution laws would not be eligible for new development or pollution permits.



Fire FERC

There are five members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) appointed by the president with the advice and of the consent of the Senate. FERC decides which fuels flow at what price through interstate pipelines and regulates the environmental aspects of projects like new hydroelectric plants. President Bush has appointed members to FERC who have run it as if it were a branch office for the largest energy companies in the United States. When California was

choking under an energy crisis brought on by market manipulations by Enron, FERC refused to step in and help consumers. The result: California ratepayers were over-billed by \$124 million in one month alone.

Kerry should appoint members to FERC who support a Renewables First policy for the United States. All new transmission investments would be targeted first to moving renewable energy from the places where we've

is the single most effective way to protect critical ecological assets.

A Different Type of Lobbyist

J. Steven Griles is deputy secretary of the interior for George W. Bush—one of the many former oil and coal industry lobbyists who are part of the Bush administration working to weaken our environmental laws. He's still being paid more than

Following Bush's lead, Kerry should appoint people who are as passionate and focused on protecting the environment as Griles is bent on serving his former client base of oil and gas companies. Carl Pope, executive director of the Sierra Club, would be an ideal director secretary of the interior. Environmental attorney Robert Kennedy Jr. could be secretary of the EPA. Jane Goodall would make an excellent head of the National Forest Service. The Rocky Mountain Institute's Amory Lovins should be secretary of energy. There are endless talented, solution-oriented advocates ready to step into service for the new president.

These four steps are only the beginning of what could be the greatest environmental presidency since the time of Nixon. John Kerry's record shows that he cares deeply about the environment; the question is whether he'll use all of the assets of the presidency to pursue an environmental agenda unflinchingly. Hopefully, we'll find out soon. ■

ADAM WERBACH is executive director of the Common Assets Defense Fund and a member of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. He is a former president of the Sierra Club, a position to which he was elected at the age of 23.

Using Bush's playbook, Kerry could employ executive orders to create a sustainable century.

got it (like wind in the Midwest) to places where we need it (like the Northeast and the West Coast). In addition, FERC would help implement a 25 percent renewable portfolio standard for federal agencies, meaning that 25 percent of the energy consumed by the federal government would need to come from renewable sources by 2012.

Ramp Up the Endangered Species Act

Since its passage in 1973, the Endangered Species Act has been the bedrock environmental law in the United States. To protect endangered species, the federal government must protect the habitat that sustains them, and Republican and Democratic presidents have listed species since its passage. In his first three years as president, Bush listed only 25 new species—and those were forced upon him by court orders. By comparison, Bush's father averaged 58 new species a year for each of the years of his one-term presidency.

John Kerry should direct his secretary of the interior to rapidly move the listing of species, from charismatic mega-fauna to insects that serve as bellwethers of the survival of the ecosystems on the planet. There are a total of 256 species currently on the candidate list waiting to be added to the more than 1,200 already on the list. The Bush administration chronically underfunded the listing of species; an additional \$30 million a year in the president's budget would make a world of differences. A recent poll by Decision Research shows that nearly all voters (90 percent) believe it's important that the Endangered Species Act provide a safety net for wildlife. Ramping up its use

\$284,000 a year by his former firm while working for the government—essentially continuing his lobbying business from inside the government while receiving a federal paycheck. Griles has been busy. He has worked to lower emissions standards for power plants, speed up the sales of gas leases in the Rocky Mountain front, continue the mining practice of mountaintop removal and weaken the Clean Water Act.

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Win Over Women

BY SUSAN DOUGLAS

HAVE ONE WORD FOR JOHN KERRY: WOMEN.

When you go to Kerry's home page, women's issues are not featured up front. You have to click on "more issues" to get there. This is not surprising for several reasons.

Democratic pollsters like Celinda Lake have found that, at least by early June, the war had become one of the most important issues for voters, trumping even the economy. Lake and others also have noted that 16 million single women are not even registered to vote and that more than 15 million young women between the ages of 18 and 34 did not vote in the last presidential election. Nor do women constitute the large bloc of swing voters they did in the 1992 election. Then, according to the Pew Research Center, 33 percent of women were swing voters but today only 23 percent are. And, stupefyingly, there does not appear to be a gender gap—more men than women support Bush, but not by much, and women overall are evenly divided between Bush and Kerry.

Nonetheless, Kerry is missing a sure bet if he underplays issues of importance to women. Because other information—some of it statistical, some of it more an-

ecdotal—suggests a great, untapped frustration among millions of women who feel their lives are too hard, too financially precarious, and too slighted, ignored and dismissed by politicians. And these are not just poor or working-class women, they are middle- and even upper-middle-class women.

Kerry's Web page acknowledges that, 35 years after the height of the women's movement, women still make 73 cents to a man's dollar. Kerry is pro-choice. He supports expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act, providing more money for states to support daycare and reforming our healthcare system. He also has begun talking about the importance of raising the minimum wage, a move that would especially affect women's financial well-being. But Kerry has yet to wrap this all up, passionately, into a package with a name (i.e., a progressive version of "family values") that women and their families can become inspired by.

Certainly Team Bush's decision to invade Iraq, the lies they told to justify the invasion and their conduct of the war since all merit voter scrutiny and condemnation. The war alone should be enough to get Bush out

of office. So should the other big issues: his tax cuts to the rich, war on the environment, assault on our civil liberties and the economy, which is not rebounding nearly as nicely as the increase in jobs, mostly in the low-end service sector, might suggest.

But women's issues may be the sleeping giant of American politics these days. One Pew Research Center poll found that while 46 percent of men were satisfied with the way things are going in

more than two of five workers are eligible. They want the crucially important caregiving that they provide for children and for infirm parents to be valued monetarily through Social Security benefits and other means. They want health insurance. They want to stop the hypocrisy of being revered by politicians' rhetoric about "motherhood" while being reviled by their public policies, or lack thereof.

Kerry has begun to tiptoe around these issues. He should turn

up the volume, and the passion, and connect with women about them. He should reiterate that under the deceptive banner of "family values," the Republicans have in fact waged a 20-year war against women, mothers and families, and ensured that it is harder to be a mother here than in any other industrialized country—unless you're rich, of course.

Women's issues aren't on the media radar screen right now, and I agree that it remains critically important that Bush be hammered about the war and his abysmal conduct regarding foreign affairs

and domestic security. But women are out there. We are a force. We are waiting for a vision of the future that speaks directly to our needs and the needs of the nation's children. We can make or break this election. Talk to us. ■

Republicans have waged a 20-year war against women, mothers and families, and ensured that it's harder to be a mother here than in any other industrialized country—unless you're rich, of course.

the United States, only 36 percent of women are. Lake reports that the Democrats may do quite well with rural women this election, as 44 percent of the young people killed in the Iraq war are from towns of 10,000 or fewer people. Inadequate healthcare is another huge issue for women. According to the Children's Defense Fund, 90 percent of our nation's 9 million uninsured kids live in working families. In Florida, nearly 47,000 low-income kids are on a waiting list for childcare. And while the *New York Times* did—in January of 2003—feature a lead editorial on Bush's "War Against Women," the status of women and their dissatisfaction with the way things are, remain seriously underreported and underappreciated.

This year I went on a multicounty tour to promote my recent book, *The Mommy Myth*. While (of course) I hoped women would respond to the book, I was taken aback by the outpouring of exasperation and, yes, anger, coming from mothers, many of them middle- and even upper-middle-class, about all of the multiple ways that the workplace and the government have betrayed and exploited mothers, children and families. When I was a guest on a national NPR show, the phone rang off the hook for an hour and the station got more than 100 e-mails about motherhood and family issues. I did one of those online "chats" at the *Washington Post* when the book was reviewed. It was the same day as the 9/11 hearings, Richard Clarke's book had just come out and accusations were flying about the misrepresentations surrounding weapons of mass destruction. Nonetheless, this chat about motherhood and the family got the fourth-largest number of hits that day, after the stories about the 9/11 hearings, Bush and WMDs.

I see the emergence of a nascent mother's movement everywhere. Millions of mothers know that as the world's superpower, we are nonetheless the only industrialized country, besides Australia, not to provide paid parental leave. (And even Australia provides 52 weeks of unpaid leave while we offer 12.) Mothers want a nationally funded, high-quality, affordable daycare system that makes preschool education available to all kids. They want decent, safe after-school programs. They want a genuine, money-backed effort to improve our public schools. They want a Family and Medical Leave Act for which

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Prioritize Civil Rights

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

WHEN DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOHN Kerry spoke at the Rain-bow/PUSH coalition convention last month, he made few specific references to issues of racial justice: "We can't rest until all Americans, black and white, rich and poor, people of all colors and all backgrounds, truly have the opportunity they need to make the American dream real."

Those generalities and "people of all colors" pieties are about the closest the Massachusetts senator comes to addressing the issues that engage and energize the minority electorate, a fact which could present real problems in such a tight race. *USA Today* columnist Dwayne Wickham noted in May that some key black Democrats question "whether the party's presumptive presidential nominee is doing enough to energize black voters."

Kerry placed several African Americans in influential positions within the campaign, leading the *Washington Post* to note that many accomplished blacks have plum gigs with the candidate. But activists continue to complain that the Kerry crew has failed to connect to the issues of most concern.

African Americans are primarily concerned with double-digit unemployment in their communities, increased incidents of police brutality, an unjust criminal justice system, poor schools and billions of dollars wasted on the war in Iraq. (Some polls registered African-American opposition to the war as high as 70 percent.)

Naming North Carolina Sen. John Edwards as the

vice presidential candidate added populist appeal to the ticket. Edwards, the son of a mill worker, found an audience during the Democratic primaries with his evocations of "two Americas"—one for the very rich and the other inhabited by everyone else. But it's unlikely that such rhetoric will be enough to energize black voters.

Still, Kerry does have a record to run on.

During his tenure in the Senate, Kerry scored high marks from the NAACP and the National Urban League for votes that supported the civil rights agenda on many issues—giving rise to his reputation as one of the Senate's most liberal members. Kerry's team needs to highlight his laudable record on issues like welfare reform, judicial nominations, and affirmative action and stress that he won plaudits from civil rights groups during an increasingly conservative era.

Many activists are taking action to insure the candidates take a stand on minority issues. In Chicago, for example, a group called the National Black Political Coordinating Convention will present its agenda to both political parties during their nominating conventions. The group also plans to publish and distribute a voter guide—which could prove helpful in honing the Democratic Party's message to black Americans.

Inspired by the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, the group already has coordinated activities in more than 20 states and plans to finalize its platform during a convention to be held July 17-18. The goal, says co-organizer Bennett Johnson, is to develop

“an agenda that will be used as a standard, a measuring stick, for black voters to use to assess the viability of federal, state and municipal candidates for political office.”

Johnson, who participated in the '72 convention, says this year's effort is more results-oriented: “We want to be able to say this is what black folks really need.”

With professionals, scholars and community activists leading the discussions,

iversity and tolerance should resonate with the hip-hop generation and the party should exploit that link just as the GOP exploits its cultural connections to the religious right and Southern conservatives. The hip-hop community's widespread dislike of Bush administration policies on war and civil liberties offer Democrats a unique opportunity to lock in a whole new generation of black voters.

Older black Americans already are on

and get serious about funding progressive media, think tanks and foundations.

In this election, however, black Americans have no choice. The Bush clique of clumsy neo-imperialists, religious opportunists and no-bid corporatists has, in less than four years, taken America from having a budget surplus to running an endless deficit; from being a beacon of democracy and human rights to an occupying force reviled by the international community. The statistics outlining black America's disproportionate miseries also damn the Republicans. Just think if they got four more years.

If Kerry should win, progressives also must fight to prevent his administration from being overrun by the DLC. Already progressive forces are rustling within the Democratic Party—backed by a loose coalition of Bush-weary voters of all types. Black Americans are among those stretching their political muscles in interesting ways, as are Latino and progressive white youth who are forming a host of activist groups designed to bring about political change. There is a refreshing sense of movement in the air. ■

Democrats need to redress the social and economic inequalities expressed in the United States' foreign and domestic policies.

the convention will address such issues as economic development, education, criminal justice, healthcare, housing and reparations. “We wanted to make sure we had people who had spent some time on task and had clear notions about agenda items,” Johnson told *N'Digo* magazine, a Chicago-based weekly.

The Gary convention also served as inspiration for organizers of the first National Hip Hop Political Convention, June 16-20 in Newark, New Jersey. About 3,000 people attended the convention to nudge the enormous but politically apathetic hip-hop generation into political activism. Conferees developed a platform that addresses such issues as education, economic justice, reparations and healthcare, which it plans to distribute to all the presidential candidates.

“To those who have snidely complained that the hip-hop generation was apathetic and politically irresponsible, it can be said those days are over,” hip-hop columnist Davy D wrote in the *San Jose Mercury News*.

The Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, funded by mogul Russell Simmons and headed by Benjamin Chavis Muhammad, has had major success in using rap stars to attract huge crowds to political events. The crucial question is whether that initial attraction will keep youth involved; analysts surely will be watching to see if hip-hop makes a difference in the vote.

“The established parties will have a deaf ear—unless we have a movement strong enough to sway elections and get commitments before the elections,” Muhammad recently told Alternet.org.

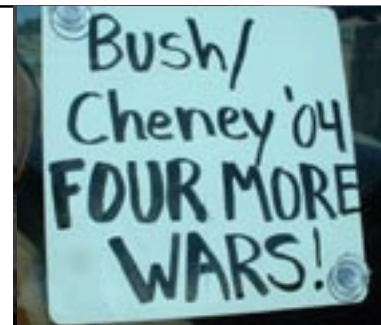
The Democrats' message of cultural di-

board. Nine of 10 African Americans voted for Al Gore in 2000, and a June Gallup Poll has Kerry beating Bush 81 percent to 12 percent among blacks. But the increased activity from across the black generational spectrum indicates there is new political movement—perhaps even a movement.

Kerry is aware that no Democrat has won a majority of the white vote since Lyndon Johnson enlisted the party into the civil rights movement in 1964, so he seeks to maintain the delicate balance demanded by America's peculiar racial protocol. Right now, Ralph Nader seems to be the beneficiary of that Democratic diffidence. His independent campaign reportedly is attracting unusual black support—buttressed by his forthright denunciation of the war in Iraq.

Kerry's wishy-washy positions on the Iraq invasion and his Bush-lite formulations on other Middle East issues reflect the muddled mindset of the Democratic mainstream on issues of foreign policy. The Democrats need to redress some of the social and economic inequalities expressed in the United States' foreign and domestic policies. By acknowledging past mistakes, the Democrats could waste less time justifying historical myths and more time crafting multilateral policies that stress international standards of human rights and social justice.

For that, Democrats need to be less in thrall to the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) and embrace instead the policy proposals being offered by the Institute for Policy Studies or the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Progressives also should take a page from the right wing's playbook



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Educate All Children

BY BARBARA MINER

THE RIGHT TO A FREE, PUBLIC EDUCATION IS ENSHRINED in the constitutions of all 50 states. That right is under attack by the Bush administration and its allies.

Using the club of its shamelessly misnamed No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the Bush agenda punishes and sets up public schools for failure while promoting privatization schemes that funnel dollars to for-profit and religiously based programs.

At stake is not just the future of public education, but the very concept of a public sector that serves the common good. If public schools—in particular, urban schools—are decimated, can any other public institution survive the conservative privatization mania?

Because the Democrats share blame for the disastrous policies of NCLB, electing John Kerry will not guarantee progressive education policies. Nonetheless, defeating Bush is essential to checking the right-wing juggernaut and promoting policies essential to ensuring quality education for all, such as equitable funding, desegregation and smaller classes.

Bush has cloaked his toxic ideological mix of right-wing economic theory and religious zealotry under the mantle of “compassionate conservatism.” Using education as the prime example of his supposed concern for poor people, Bush poses his policies as an alternative to the Democrats’ “soft bigotry of low expectations.”

But the gulf between Bush’s rhetoric and reality is exemplified in NCLB, a cornerstone of his domestic agenda that entails a monumental shift in federal education policy. Opponents have labeled the act “No Child Left Untested.”

Proposed on January 22, 2001, two days after Bush took office, NCLB passed a year later in the heady months following 9/11 when Bush’s popularity was high. The bill effectively merged the privatization agenda of right-wing Republicans with the corporate-supported standardization and testing agenda of centrists in both parties. Backing by Democrats, including Kerry, ensured bipartisan support for what has become an albatross—some say noose—around the neck of public education.

Few in the country had even read the 1,100-page bill when it passed. But in the last two years, as its draconian measures have become clear, opposition has grown throughout the country’s 15,000 school districts and 95,000 public schools serving 48 million students.

NCLB is “like a Russian novel,” says Scott Howard, former superintendent in Perry, Ohio. “That’s because it’s long, it’s complicated and, in the end, everybody gets killed.”

The heart of NCLB is its monomaniacal obsession with standardized tests as the sole determinant of school success, and its trigger-happy willingness to label schools and entire districts as failures.

The act mandates that all students be “proficient” by the year 2014, a feat unprecedented in human history. To reach that impossible goal, NCLB requires schools to test 95 percent of all students in grades 3-8

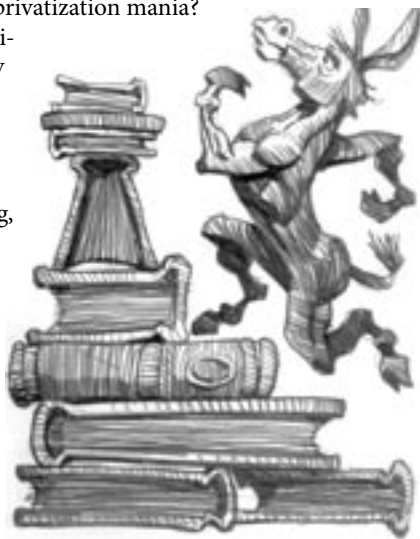
every year in math and reading and at least once in high school. Test results are analyzed for nine subgroups, such as black students, special ed students and bilingual students. If even one of those subgroups fails to meet its mandated target, in even one of those tests, in even one of those grade levels, the entire school will not make “adequate yearly progress” and could be labeled a failing school. After two years, failing schools are subject to sanctions.

The seemingly benign bureaucratic term “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) has become a nightmare for schools. AYP most severely punishes low-income schools with students of color and bilingual students—those students who have fallen victim to the inherent biases of standardized tests since they were introduced a century ago. But AYP also traps more affluent suburban schools in its net. That, ultimately, could be its undoing.

In the first two years of NCLB, about 25 percent of the nation’s schools failed to make adequate yearly progress. In Florida, 88 percent of the schools were on the failing list. In California, home to roughly 13 percent of the nation’s public school students, officials estimate that 99 percent of the state’s schools will fail to meet progress requirements by 2014.

Not surprisingly, there is escalating concern that NCLB will be used to label all of public education a failure, thus paving the way for privatization via for-profit private management companies and vouchers for private and religious schools.

Sen. James Jeffords of Vermont, a former Republican who became an independent in large part because of the party’s hypocrisy on education, has called NCLB “a back door to anything that will let the private sector take over public education, something the Re-



publicans have wanted for years.”

What makes the Bush agenda so dangerous is that it weds conservatives’ fever for privatization to fundamentalists’ devotion to religious education. Both groups see a chance to capture large chunks of the roughly \$350 billion spent annually on K-12 public education.

Bush has left it to Secretary of Education Rod Paige to take the vanguard in denigrating public schools while extolling religious education. “All things being equal, I would prefer to have a child in a school that has a strong appreciation for Christian values where a child is taught to have a strong faith,” said Paige, according to the news service of the Southern Baptist Convention in April 2003. “In a religious environment, the value system is set. That’s not the case in a public school where there are so many kids with different values and different faiths.”

A quarter-century ago, Ronald Reagan launched the conservative counterrevolution with his winning mix of conservative economic policy and right-wing social agenda—and masking it all with warm and fuzzy rhetoric. Since then, hard-core Republican policies have gained strength and now dominate all three branches of government.

Breaking that right-wing Republican stranglehold is progressives’ absolute prior-

ity. At the same time, progressives must articulate clear alternatives to the lukewarm palliatives of many moderate Democrats. The only area where Democrats *have* differentiated themselves from Republicans is their opposition to vouchers, a significant difference that is the educational equivalent

► An end to the unconscionable segregation that is the hallmark of American education and that perpetuates our separate and unequal educational system—one for affluent, predominantly white suburban students and the other for poor, urban students of color.

Adequate and equitable funding is required for schools to provide qualified teachers, small classes and up-to-date facilities.

of support for abortion rights when discussing women’s issues. The other basics of a truly progressive alternative are clear:

- Adequate and equitable funding so that all schools have the resources to provide qualified teachers, small classes and up-to-date facilities.
- High expectations and a rigorous curriculum for all students, not just middle-class kids on a college track.

► A commitment to free public preschool so all children enter first grade ready to learn and an equally strong commitment to access to higher education for poor students.

In the richest and most powerful country in the history of the world, is that too much to expect? ■

BARBARA MINER is a columnist for *Rethinking Schools* magazine (www.rethinkingschools.org).

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Cure a Sick Healthcare System

BY STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER AND DAVID HIMMELSTEIN

LIKE CAPISTRANO'S SWALLOWS, THE DEMOCRATS always return to health reform. Unfortunately, this year they're showing little more brain power than the birds.

Don't get us wrong, we're no fans of President George Bush's health agenda: Ship tens of billions of federal dollars to a panoply of healthcare firms privatize Medicare and dangle skimpy tax credits in front of the 44 million uninsured. But Kerry seems intent on refilling a failed prescription for reform: by proposing to give hundreds of billions to private insurers in exchange for measly coverage for some of the uninsured.

Our healthcare system is so sick that even people with

tem, making off with seven- and even eight-figure incomes as their reward for cooking the books, defrauding Medicare and abusing patients to inflate profits.

Bush's signal healthcare achievement, passage of the \$534 billion Medicare drug bill, already is unravelling. Double-digit yearly price increases—even for older drugs—already have eaten up the paltry savings (about 15 percent) available from the recently introduced Medicare drug discount cards. Even the massive flow of federal funds that will commence in 2006, when the full drug benefit kicks in, will only get seniors back where they started last year in terms of drug spending.

Why will \$534 billion in new federal spending (over 10 years) buy so little? First, the new drug coverage will be purchased through private insurance plans with overhead costs that average four times Medicare's. Second, the bill prohibits Medicare from negotiating with drug companies to lower their prices (and effectively bans imports of Canadian drugs on the preposterous pretext that they're unsafe). Both the Canadian government and our own Defense Department have used their purchasing clout to garner volume discounts. Prohibiting such bargaining assures drug firms of hundreds of billions in excess profits.

Finally, the bill hands Medicare HMOs—which have been ripping off Medicare for years—an extra \$46 billion. Since 1985, Medicare has paid HMOs for seniors who choose to enroll. The payment formula has allowed HMOs to collect far more than it would have cost the taxpayers to care for these seniors in the traditional Medicare program. The Congressional Budget Office and the General Accounting Office have estimated these extra costs at about \$2 billion per year. Yet HMOs—burdened by administrative overhead far higher than Medicare's—

Universal coverage under National Health Insurance would not increase health costs.

good insurance are feeling the fever. Premiums for employers and their workers are rising 12 percent, even 18 percent per year. Employers have downsized coverage by super-sizing copayments and deductibles. Insurance often proves illusory when it's most needed—payment denials, visit limits, loopholes and policy cancellations leave millions stuck with huge medical bills despite what they thought was good coverage. Most people's choice of doctors and hospitals is restricted. Seniors can't afford drugs, Medicaid recipients face draconian cuts and everyone's rushed out of the hospital.

Investor-owned healthcare has flourished, despite definitive evidence that it raises both costs and death rates. And bandit CEOs regularly raid our health sys-

complained they couldn't make a profit from Medicare patients.

Bush's solution? Send them more money. So in 2004, Medicare will pay HMOs an extra \$552 above the cost of traditional Medicare for each senior they enroll, according to an estimate by the Commonwealth Fund.

Incredibly, the Republicans (and many Democrats) describe this corporate welfare program as a "pro-competition" health policy. Drug firms are granted patents that shield them from generic competitors, foreign drug imports are banned, government is precluded from negotiating over prices and HMOs are given huge subsidies to compete unfairly against Medicare—all in the name of competition.

Sadly, many Bush initiatives merely continued Clinton's policies. Kerry promises more of the same. He proposes to spend about \$65 billion annually to expand coverage through two mechanisms: One, offer government subsidies for private insurance; two, expand Medicaid. As a nod to middle-class Americans, he'd try to hold down private premiums by having the feds pick up the tab for any patient whose care costs more than \$50,000—a misguided effort that shifts some costs to the taxpayers but leaves control in the hands of private firms. Kerry's massive new spending would leave at least 17 million uninsured (by his own estimate) and tens of millions more with inadequate coverage, and stimulate the malignant growth of healthcare costs.

In contrast, a single payer national health insurance (NHI) program could simultaneously cover all of the uninsured, upgrade coverage for most other Americans and save money. Under NHI, everyone would be covered for care at any hospital, doctor's office or clinic without copayments or deductibles. Patients would enjoy a free choice of provider, and doctors and nurses would be freed from the massive bureaucracy that encumbers care and wastes money. For-profit ownership of hospitals and other clinical facilities would be proscribed, and private health insurers and most HMOs would be eliminated—saving billions now squandered on profits and executives' incomes, while upgrading quality.

Surprisingly, universal coverage under NHI would not increase health costs. At \$6,200 per capita, Americans already spend nearly twice as much for care as do Canadians, Australians, Germans, Swedes and the Swiss—all of whom enjoy universal coverage and lower death rates than ours. Much of the cost difference is due to our mammoth health bureaucracy, which wastes upward of \$300

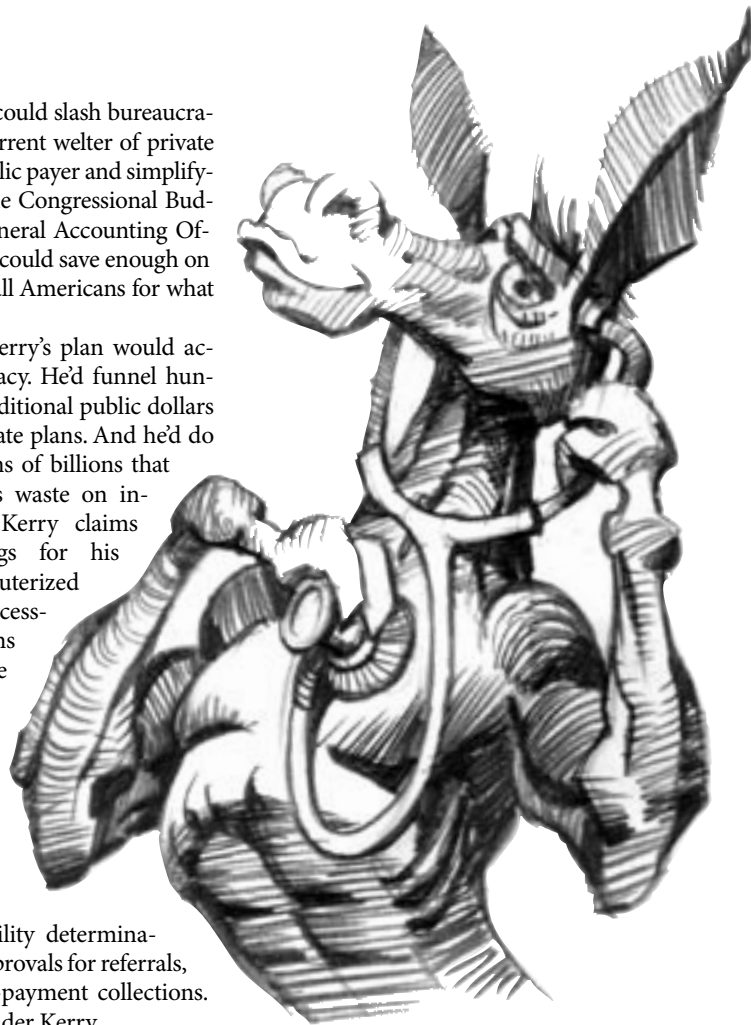
billion annually. NHI could slash bureaucracy by replacing the current welter of private plans with a single public payer and simplifying payments. Even the Congressional Budget Office and the General Accounting Office concede that NHI could save enough on bureaucracy to cover all Americans for what we're now spending.

On the contrary, Kerry's plan would actually boost bureaucracy. He'd funnel hundreds of billions of additional public dollars through wasteful private plans. And he'd do nothing to cut the tens of billions that doctors and hospitals waste on insurance paperwork. Kerry claims administrative savings for his plan—through computerized billing and claims processing. But such claims are not credible; more than two-thirds of all healthcare bills already are filed electronically. It's not sending the bill that's expensive. It's the insurance advertising and sales, utilization review, eligibility determination, obtaining pre-approvals for referrals, cost-tracking, and co-payment collections. All would continue under Kerry.

For the 85 percent of Americans who currently have insurance, Kerry offers virtually nothing. No plausible plan to upgrade their coverage, slow premium increases, bring down drug costs, improve quality, or expand the number of nurses. He'd just ask taxpayers facing skyrocketing premiums to chip in for the coverage of the uninsured.

Much of what Kerry is proposing already was tried, and failed miserably. Medicaid expansion has been pushed by Democrats for decades. Since 1987, 11.4 million people have been added to the Medicaid rolls, and Medicaid spending has risen from \$50 billion to \$228 billion, eating a hole in state budgets. Yet the number of uninsured has grown by 10.2 million people during this period, and Medicaid has remained second-class coverage, segregating the poor. On many measures, Medicaid patients fare no better than the uninsured. Medicaid should be replaced by mainstream coverage, not expanded.

Subsidies for private coverage also have a dismal track record. A 2002 federal program offers to pay 65 percent of premium costs for workers who've lost jobs due to foreign imports. As of December 31, 2003, 8,874 of



the 500,000 eligible workers were taking advantage of the subsidy. With private coverage costing about \$10,000 per family, few low-income workers can afford insurance, even with a big boost from government.

NHI isn't just good policy, its good politics. According to a recent Washington Post/ABC News poll, 62 percent of Americans favor "a universal health insurance program, in which everyone is covered under a program like Medicare that's run by the government and financed by taxpayers."

Of course, NHI would be a death blow to the health insurance industry and it would threaten the super-profits of powerful drug and hospital firms. Presumably, that is why only Ralph Nader and Dennis Kucinich have been willing to buck the special interests, and say what Americans long to hear about health care: NHI can succeed. Healthcare is a right, not a commodity. ■

STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER and **DAVID HIMMELSTEIN** are professors of medicine at Harvard University and co-founders of Physicians for a National Health Program (www.pnhp.org).



BY DAVID MOBERG

There's No Place Like Home

Politically speaking, Kansas conjures images of Bob Dole's crusty but muted Main Street conservatism. But for many decades after anti-slavery militants settled there in the mid-19th Century, Kansas was associated with varieties of

ideological radicalism—mainly left-wing populism and socialism, but also prohibitionism and religious zealotry. Yet during the 1990s, as native son Thomas Frank recounts in his lively new book, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, Kansas became a hotbed of radical right-wing Republicanism and a quintessential “red state” in the closely divided 2000 presidential election.

The right won in Kansas, Frank argues, by waging class war, but with class completely stripped of any foundation in economic inequality or power and defined in purely cultural terms. As played out in Kansas—and even more so among the national right-wing commentariat—this is a war of “real Americans” against a snooty, immoral liberal elite that controls an overbearing government and generates a popular culture that victimizes the God-fearing, super-patriotic, gun-toting, evolution-doubting and strongly anti-feminist, anti-gay “majority.” The cultural class warriors have an economic

program—radically cutting taxes, business regulation and government, including farm programs and public schools—but the most committed foot soldiers march to a religious and cultural drumbeat.

It was in many ways a remarkable class war. It was fought mainly within the state's long-dominant Republican Party. The insurgent radical right (“the Cons,” in Frank's terms) attacked the moderate party establishment (“the Mods”) as a liberal elite at odds with the masses. But it was not just an ideological split in the party. It was a class divide. The Cons, Frank argues, drew support from the working class; the Mods were primarily more affluent corporate types. On economic issues both factions were conservative, but the Cons mobilized their followers with angry rhetorical riffs reminiscent of Populist class appeals—even though Con leaders often were business elite opportunists.

And the corporate elite mainly benefited from the policies the Cons implemented. The insurgent work-

ers lost economically from the Con political victories, which intensified the effects of market forces that already had brought ruin to many ordinary Kansans in impoverished rural regions, Wal-Martized small towns and de-unionized meat-packing plants.

“For decades Americans have experienced a populist uprising that only benefits the people it is supposed to be targeting,” Frank writes. “In Kansas we merely see an extreme version of this mysterious situation. The angry workers, mighty in their numbers, are marching irresistibly against the arrogant. They are shaking their fists at the sons of privilege. They are laughing at the dainty affectations of the Leawood toffs. They are massing at the gates of Mission Hills [the wealthy suburb where Frank grew up], hoisting the black flag, and while the millionaires tremble in their mansions, they are bellowing out their terrifying demands, ‘We are here,’ they scream, ‘to cut your taxes.’”

Frank, the founding editor of *The Baffler*, a delightfully quirky occasional journal, and author of *One Market Under God* and *The Conquest of Cool*, is a wry and artfully entertaining writer with a keen perception of the ironies of popular culture. Through a meditation on Kansas—part history, autobiography, reporting and textual criticism of right-wing pundits—*What’s the Matter with Kansas?* tackles one of the central mysteries of American politics: Why do the targets of corporate America’s class war not rebel, or—as Frank suggests—rebel in ways that worsens their own economic well-being?

Frank argues that they have been conned by the Great Backlash, a reaction against the cultural and political upheaval of the 1960s that keeps the cultural pot stirred with a multitude of disparate, often petty

What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America
By Thomas Frank
Metropolitan Books
320 pages, \$24

complaints—what he dubs the “plen-T-plaint”—about liberals taking the country to hell in a handbasket. Much of what the Backlash dislikes, especially in the culture, is not particularly liberal or left but a product of corporate America profiting from appropriating hipness, Frank argues, just as much of the upheaval in people’s lives arises from market forces, not decisions of pointy-headed professors.

The Great Backlash is historically more fluid than suggested by the view from Kansas, where it erupted later than much of the nation’s reaction against the movements of the 1960s and apparently was less motivated by racial animus. It continues a longer history of political reaction, including anti-Communism. In past decades, workers also were recruits to earlier forms of political reaction, including McCarthyism and fascism, and old rants against “communism” are now replayed against “liberalism,” with inverted class war twists. Frank notes in sharp detail the contradictions between the cultural reactionaries and free-market ideology, but he falls short in explaining how those odd-bedfellow ideologies came to cohabit.

Frank’s central, provocative argument that the “Cons” represent the working class in Kansas would have been more persuasive with more detailed analysis of voting patterns, opinion surveys or in-depth interviews. He profiles grassroots right-wing leaders like Tim Golba, who works on the line in a Pepsi plant, but it would have been good to learn more about

Kansans who vote for right-wing Republicans but aren’t committed ideologues. The political balance can shift as these voters weigh alternatives, even in Kansas, where the governor and one of four Congressmen are recently-elected conservative Democrats.

It’s easy to misread Frank’s account to suggest that the Great Backlash is a movement of the vast majority of workers, who have collectively gone off the deep right end. But I suspect many of the Backlashers are small businessmen, sales people, farmers and other lower-middle-class types, and that many disaffected workers have just stopped voting altogether. Also, there are other causes of confusion about class besides the Backlash, including the long-term trend for people to see themselves as consumers rather than workers or citizens, and the “national security” issues created by the warped vision of America’s imperial foreign policy.

In Frank’s account the Backlash took hold in Kansas

following a large-scale, militant Operation Rescue anti-abortion protest staged in Wichita in 1991, spurring the creation of a well-organized right-wing movement to take over the Republican Party. But even more, he blames the abandonment of the working class by Democrats as they sought corporate money and “middle-class” votes. In national polls and voting patterns, working-class voters still lean Democratic and express relatively progressive views, but unions—which reorient workers from cultural to economic issues—are shrinking, and the Democrats are not creating a progressive answer to working-class discontent. Many Kansans—and their brethren elsewhere—are not acting like the rational economic agents of free-market theory, partly because they are offered no rational strategy for people in their class shoes. Frank’s journey to the heart of Kansas is a savvy and engaging effort to put social class back where it deserves to be, in the center of politics in Kansas and the nation. ■

ART SPACE



A detail from an installation called **The Right to Strike First Club**, part of Copenhagen artist **Khaled Ramadan**’s “The Chamber of Secrets,” a forum for activities aimed at helping the community understand complex issues. The bird (“Strike”) represents chickens purchased by poor Iraqis (who can’t afford gas masks) to serve as an early warning for gas attacks. See more at <http://hjem.get2net.dk/khaledramadan>.

BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

When Yes Means No

The worst of times, the best of times: Sure, our nation is in the hands of a federal cabal to which nothing—lives, rights, nature, language, science, sovereignty—is sacred. Except profit. But as a result the popular culture is

rousing from its inoculated slumber like it hasn't in 35 years.

The symptoms of mass awakening are everywhere, but note, please, the astonishing surge of nonfiction film occupying even corporate-chain theaters, bel-lowing radical truisms. Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* may be as historic as the war it critiques (and might turn out to be the most effective piece of political cinema since Leni Riefenstahl), but 2004 also has seen, so far, *The Corporation* (a wickedly eloquent exposé of business power), *The Hunting of the President* (in which Ken Starr gets hung out to dry, finally), the anti-McD's hit *Super Size Me*, the desegregation history *With All Deliberate Speed*, *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (which left Western culpability implicit, but *still*) and the popular Al-Jazeera chronicle *Control Room*. Coming soon is the Howard Zinn profile *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, and, if we're lucky, the thus-far-undistributed *Orwell Rolls in His Grave* (on the new Newspeak) and Fernando Solanas' *Memoria del Saqueo*, a furious history of federal Argentine skullduggery and IMF devastation.

Into this thick tide strolls *The Yes Men*, a chronicle of scathing dissent in a plague year. Assem-

bled by the team responsible for the Kopple-esque *American Job* (1995) and the decidedly less so *American Movie* (1999), the new film traces the trajectory of the loose-knit titular conspiracy, as it's led by two seasoned yet irreverent activists (a story arc, by the way, that constitutes most of the film's hilarious narrative, and so readers may wish to avoid spoilers here). Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno



The Yes Men

Directed by Chris Smith,
Dan Ollman & Sarah Price

already were huge in the stunningly huge corporate-sabotage underground movement exemplified by @™ark.com (see it to believe it). As a gaming software worker, Bichlbaum reprogrammed the SimCity video game so that its background characters would become gay bodybuilders on certain dates. Bonanno, as a member of the highly publicized Barbie Liberation Army, participated in the campaign to switch hundreds of Barbie and G.I. Joe voice boxes and then return the toys to store shelves. (This intervention created an uproarious storm of amused press and was more thoroughly recounted in Craig Baldwin's 1995 quasi-doc *Sonic Outlaws*.)

Together, the boys simply set up a Web site parody of the WTO, dryly cheerleading the institution's economic cut-and-burn tactics, at a surprisingly unclaimed domain name: GATT.org. Neither of the merry pranksters seemed too surprised when people began responding to the site as if it were genuine. But then they were invited to speak *in person*—on CNBC and at economic confer-

ences—as *representatives* of the WTO. Men of their word, they bought secondhand suits, got on planes and did it.

As affable as its protagonists are, *The Yes Men*, in the end, is somewhat slight: Bonanno and Bichlbaum's opportunities to enter the public eye as "honest" WTO execs were occasional, often small-time and sometimes scarcely attended. Too much of the film is spent watching them travel, shop and worry about scheduling. But the upside is wondrous, particularly Bichlbaum's CNBC appearance as a WTO spokesman (his ridiculous *noms de incartade* have a W.C. Fieldsian panache), straightfacedly spouting capitalist gibberish, and his lecture in Finland to an audience of European economists, which espoused the return of slavery and climaxed with the introduction of a gold "manager's suit," complete with 3-foot inflatable phallus.

In our media-balkanized slipstream, *The Yes Men* can have the effect of a nurturing salve, merely by virtue of its heroes' eloquent anti-corporate ideas. Yet if *The Yes Men* seems to, in the end, only half-fulfill its own outrageous ambitions, then maybe that's because it feels like the first chapter—the initial salvo—of a far broader, far angrier and far more newsworthy protest process. It could be, perhaps, a weekly cable program—but of course the irony remains that the more famous the Yes Men might become, the less effective they'd be as surreptitious agents of public mockery. But perhaps not: theyesmen.org is an ongoing concern, enlisting thousands of new Yes Men to act on their consciences and do it with Voltairean flair. If you want more, sign up today. ■

MICHAEL ATKINSON is a film critic for *The Village Voice* and most recently author of *One Hundred Children Waiting for a Train*.



BY KEVIN CANFIELD

Tuneful Humanism

Here's what I like as much as just about anything in the world: Music that sounds hopeful in the face of cynicism. An uplifting melody; an artfully crafted hook; a redemptive lyric about love; a vocal harmony

so beautiful that it catches you off-guard—if you ask me, these are all good reasons to be alive.

With so much cause for pessimism (a war, a bad president, etc.) now's when we need this sort of music, and two very different records have arrived to fill the void.

Let's start with A.C. Newman, a Canadian singer of irresistible rock songs. A good argument can be made on behalf of the notion that Newman is largely responsible for two of the three or four best power pop records of the last five years. In 2000 he and a handful of friends put together a band called the New Pornographers; the group took its name from, of all people, the televangelist Jimmy Swag-

gart, who once labeled rock music "the new pornography." That year saw the release of the band's first effort, a majestic, rollicking album titled "Mass Romantic." With crunchy, crackling guitars, vocal harmonies and an occasional backing vocal turn from a choir of little kids, it is a brilliant, big-hearted record.

After the release of a second, less impressive New Pornographers album last year, Newman turned his attention to a solo record. The just-released "The Slow Wonder" (Matador) has qualities that most rock music can only dream of. A lean 34 minutes of indie pop that is at once stately and emotionally authentic, it blends guitars and piano and off-beat vocal phras-

ing in a way that's impossible to ignore.

"On the Table" might be the single most compelling song released all year. Against a bed of ascendant piano, drums and jittery guitar parts, Newman sings about dancers' legs, thieves and innocence. With an urgent, three-word refrain and a shimmering sound, it's a deliriously beautiful song. "Drink To Me, Babe, Then," is almost as good. A bit slower-paced, it's an acoustic guitar-driven look at a puzzling relationship; fittingly, Newman closes the song by whistling a melancholy tune.

Newman's songs have a sort of stickiness to them—you just can't let go of them. I've been listening to this record for

days on end, and oftentimes I can't get beyond the third or fourth song—not because the rest of the record isn't great (it is), but because I need to hear those first three all over again.

The same quality is present on a new record from an idiosyncratic New Jersey outfit known alternately as the Danielson Famile and, more recently, Br. Danielson. A charmingly strange crew that has performed in matching nurses' garb, the group makes gorgeous music. There are bells, banjos, drums, guitars and fiddles on the new album, titled "Brother Is To Son"—but the band's most useful instrument is bandleader Daniel Smith's voice.

Singing in a high-register yowl that calls to mind a half-mad farmer who's lost track of his herd, Smith is not what one would call a "good" vocalist in the traditional sense. And to call his lyrics uplifting might be a stretch; at one point he goes so far as to confess, "This music, it is killing us." But on songs like "Cookin' Mid-County," a mid-tempo lament, and the impossibly catchy "Our Givest," there is a humanism, a hopefulness that propels Danielson to epic heights.

There's also social commentary. One song, titled "Things Against Stuff," bemoans the caste system and acquisitiveness of contemporary America: "We cannot win," Smith sings, "with the chopping this, dicing that, compartmenting you and therefore the group-ing of me."

But lyrics are secondary for these records. What both Newman and Br. Danielson have done is to remind listeners once again of the visceral, inscrutable pleasures derived from the sound of heady, fun, non-derivative rock music. And don't we need that right about now. ■

KEVIN CANFIELD writes on music for *In These Times*.

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Revenge

Continued from page 40

national corporations. But overuse has dulled their edge. Rarely, then, does this book employ such terms as *corporate assholes*, *greedy bastards* or *plutocratic sons of bitches*."

Of course, Charro will not sit quietly through this pinko chatter. "I come all this way to get a little advice and all you do is badmouth people who try to make a few bucks," he says to Cassandra. "You know, I think you're jealous." She calms him by offering him more services from her spa, a Swedish massage or a high-tech vibration treatment to reduce stress. Then she continues her lessons in market exploitation.

Throughout the tale, El Físgón proves a tremendously versatile illustrator. His images range from big-nosed cartoon caricatures of public officials, to darkly inked photographic renderings of indigenous Mexicans, to smudged charcoal sketches of gun-toting skeletons. At times, he resorts to clichéd conventions: El Físgón's bosses are invariably rotund, while his workers tend to be emaciated. But more often he creates a gripping agitprop iconography.

After discussing U.S. reliance in the '70s on Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet to put into practice the neoliberal free-market theories that, until then, had only been a twinkle in Milton Friedman's eye, El Físgón provides an image of Pinochet kneeling and praying before a cross inside his home. Meanwhile, through an open doorway, the reader can see hundreds of crosses lining the general's backyard in neat rows.

Extending his story through today's war on terrorism, El Físgón shows the U.N. logo, a globe surrounded by laurels. In the next panel, a cowboy boot kicks the globe clear of the frame. George W. Bush, dressed in a Roman toga, then places the laurels above his ears.

In addition to serving as one of the in-house editorial cartoonists at Mexico City's prominent *La Jornada* newspaper, Rafael Barajas has illustrated popular children's books and published a history of Mexican cartooning in the 19th Century, an era when radical "combat cartoonists" rebelled against colonialism and government censorship. Barajas puts his command of art history to work in *How to Succeed at Globalization*. He visually alludes to period styles in his romp through past centuries and he includes arresting, macabre historical illustrations by Albrecht Dürer, George Cruikshank, and Gustave Doré.

Barajas clearly identifies with his 19th Century predecessors. "I takes sides on everything, even if I see two dogs fighting on the street," he joked in a 2002 interview with *The New York Times*. "If a big dog attacks a small dog, then I am outraged. If a small dog attacks a big dog, I figure justice has been done."

Barajas stands in good company in Mexico City. There, elder statesman Eduardo del Rio (pen name Rius) works alongside a generation of cartoonists that came of age politically in the shadow of the government's 1968 Tlatelolco massacre of student demonstrators. Along with illustrations by El Físgón, *How to Succeed at Globalization* includes drawings by Rius, Antonio Helguera and José Hernández, making it a small treasury of activist Mexican cartooning.

Of course, admirers of right-wing President Vicente Fox have their own satirists. Barajas has publicly complained about pro-government cartoonists who seem to make a far easier living than his leftist colleagues. Yet the fact that El Físgón has gained considerable notoriety at one of his country's most prominent newspapers points to a spectrum of acceptable political opinion in Mexico that is considerably

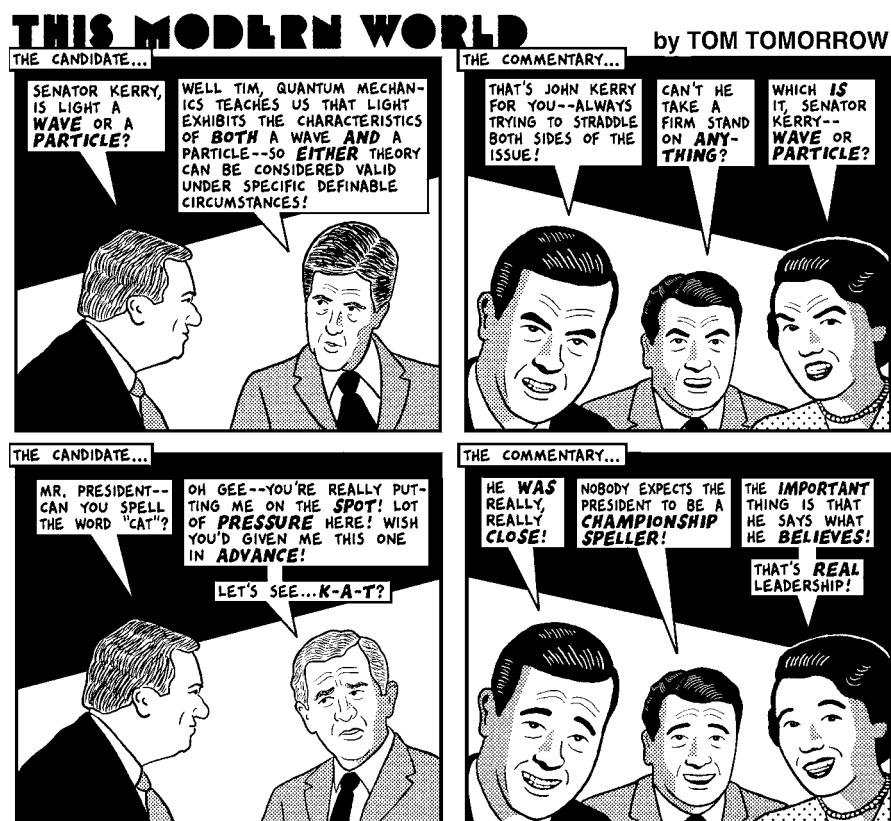
wider than in our domestic media. It is as if Al Franken were cracking jokes in celebration of the Zapatistas rather than the bygone Clinton administration.

Indeed, the drawings in *How to Succeed at Globalization* are not tailored to U.S. sensibilities. El Físgón's cartoons on 9/11 and on Afghanistan, although ultimately emphasizing the message that "horror does not justify horror" and that "a world of social injustice is a world where terrorism can thrive," would have quickly earned him a place of scorn alongside Susan Sontag in the eyes of most U.S. pundits. At the same time, the artist shows that you can get away with a lot more with picture book humor than text-heavy treatise—that taking cartoons into combat remains a vibrant activist endeavor.

At the end of his visit to Carrera Clinica, Charro is shocked to receive a bill for \$20,000 itemizing the relaxing care and fine food he inadvertently indulged while hearing of free-market evils. "This is a scam," he protests.

"All business is a scam," Cassandra replies with a wink, "but it sure took you a while to figure it out, didn't it?" ■

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REVENGE OF THE COMBAT CARTOONIST



Meet Charro Machorro, the hero of *How to Succeed at Globalization: A Primer for the Roadside Vendor*, a cartoon history of capitalism by Mexican satirist Rafael Barajas, better known as El Fisgón ("the busybody" in Mark Fried's translation). As the book opens Charro has braved a dangerous border crossing. But he won't let anyone confuse him with an undocumented immigrant. He is a taxpaying entrepreneur,

Despite having read all of the top self-help books, from "How to Succeed, by Dale" to "Better Loopholes," Charro can't seem to get ahead in business. Thus, he has ventured into the desert to seek career advice from the famous Cassandra Carrera, a soothsayer and faith healer who specializes in voodoo economics. After he finds her Carrera Clinica, Cassandra shows

It soon becomes evident to the reader that the mind these characters are surveying is less

Continued on page 39